

Vital Religion;  
Or, the Personal Knowledge  
of Christ.

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VITAL RELIGION  
OR  
THE PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE OF  
CHRIST.

BY  
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## PREFACE.

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WE believe, though we should hesitate in making a prediction, that the tendency to find a basis for faith in actual experience is likely to strengthen during the present century. The power of authority has sensibly weakened, and the reliance upon argument as being in itself adequate to sustain religious faith is not so constant as it was. More and more, serious men are being led to ask whether Religion is not largely a matter of personal experience. It is not that they feel authority can be discarded, or intellectual processes cast aside, but that, as Mr. Mellone asserts in his book on "Leaders of Religious Thought in the Nineteenth Century," experience is of first importance in religious belief. By this is not meant an isolated experience unshared by others, nor one the chief characteristic of which is feeling, but, on the contrary, one that is reasonable, continuous, sober, resting on sure foundations.

The word Religion itself, according to the popular conception of it, encourages this expectation, for it expresses the idea of an obligation by which man is bound to an invisible Lord.\* If that may be accepted as generally, if not etymologically, correct, then Vital Religion must mean our sense of that obligation. Or, to go further, if the Christian Religion may be defined as expressing the idea of a living union with a Living Lord, then Vital Christianity must mean our personal experience of that union. Or, again, if

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\* Liddon: *Elements of Religion*, p. 19.

the cardinal truth of the Christian Religion is that this Living Lord is endowed with the fulness of a perfect human nature, like in all points to our own, sin only excepted, then it is difficult to see how the Life of our union with Him can be grounded in anything but a human experience. Of course, constituted as we are, there must be “outward joints and bands,” but, however sacred and venerable these may be, and are, they can never be more than the channels and pledges of that Life which finds its true home in union with the human spirit.

But all this, it may be said, is admitted. Why labour it? Yes, admitted theoretically, but not practically. Many a man recognizes the obligations of Religion, looks upon it as a bulwark of morality and a stimulus to lofty thoughts and ambitions, confesses that it is often a great help to him, and that its services, when well conducted, have a beneficial effect, but if you speak of his relation to the Person to Whom the worship is offered, of the claims that Person makes upon his attention and affections, more intimate and pressing than those of mother, wife or sister, he is silent. He has never supposed it necessary to look into that, any more than a good patriot would regard it necessary to consider his personal relation to the sovereign. As patriotism consists in devotion to the country, so he would say religion in devotion to the Church. As patriotism is expressed in bearing the country’s burdens, in obedience to its laws and in loyalty to its sovereign, so religion in supporting the Church’s work, in obeying her laws, and in loyalty to her Sovereign Head. The loyalty in both cases is of a similar character, general rather than personal, occasional in expression rather than continuous. The Christian Religion, according to this conception, has very much the same character as the Jewish religion. It excites an interest in a great spiritual Society which has a thousand lofty

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historical associations intertwined with it, which is more national than universal, and as political as it is religious. The Church, in both cases, occupies a larger place than its Sovereign Lord.

There is much to be said for this view of the question. Such a Religion certainly binds men together by an attachment to the greatest Society the world has known. It inspires them with devotion to the highest aims, moral and spiritual, that have ever been conceived. It stirs their enthusiasm by simple and moving ceremonial, by most solemn and deeply mysterious rites. It quickens their intelligence by divinely inspired narratives and instructions ; but—and here lies the fatal defect—it leaves untouched the most powerful motive the world knows, and that, personal affection. As we turn from this conception to that of the New Testament, it is like passing from the crowded political meeting, where a national cause has been pleaded, to the yet more crowded streets, where the Queen is passing in her Jubilee procession. In the one case there is enthusiasm for a principle, in the other for the Person that embodies the principle. We need not say which is the more powerful, or which is predominant in the Gospels, Acts, and Epistles. Personal devotion to Christ is the keynote struck in every page of the New Testament. It is everywhere assumed that all Christians have it, and have it as a result of their own personal experience. The Church, her Sacraments, Worship, Morality are identified with Christ. As Canon Liddon writes, in a noble passage : “Christ is Christianity . . . Detach Christianity from Christ and it vanishes before your eyes into intellectual vapour. For it is of the essence of Christianity that day by day, hour by hour, the Christian should live in conscious, felt, sustained relationship to the ever-living Author of his creed and of his life. Christianity is non-existent apart from Christ ; it

centres in Christ ; it radiates now, as at the first, from Christ. Christ is the quickening Spirit of Christian humanity. He lives in Christians. He thinks in Christians. He acts through Christians and with Christians. He is indissolubly associated with every movement of the Christian's deepest life."\*

It is this old truth, experienced as a fact and not imagined, that the author has endeavoured to present in the pages that follow. He believes it to be needed. There is no question that the general attitude towards Religion is unsatisfactory. Not that there is hostility, carping criticism, or even dull indifference, but life is too full for its serious consideration. The opportunities in work and recreation have enormously increased. In the one, the man is less and less the machine ; in the other, he has almost infinite variety. Papers, magazines, cheap novels are constantly engaging the mind, so that it scarcely ever finds time to realize its own deep needs, and, when they do assert themselves and produce their inevitable consequence, depression, it is not difficult even for the artizan to get sufficient change of scene by train, tram, or bicycle to lift the cloud. And in the last resort there are stimulants. The excitement aroused by sport may be maintained for a time by gambling ; the exhaustion that follows laborious work and recreation may be momentarily relieved by drugs or intoxicants. So it is possible for a man to go on for many years absorbed in his work and pleasures, and to regard with amused contempt the friend who suggests that there are claims of tremendous importance which will one day make themselves felt, and which can only be satisfied by Religion.

For this state of things the popular conception of Religion is largely to blame. Religion has lost its romance. Men see it embodied in a huge social organization, apparently

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\* Liddon : *Our Lord's Divinity*, p. 127.

cold, formal and mechanical. They believe it "makes for righteousness" and upholds moral order, is worthy of a moderate support and occasional consideration, but it very distinctly lacks interest. They have no doubt that on the whole it is a good thing, but then it is in competition with other good things which prove their power to interest more quickly. Its demands, too, are somewhat imperative. They have seen it presented as man's best friend, but always either as an exacting friend or a friend conscious of being slighted. It is not the laughing, pleasant friend that Pleasure is, who cries, "You may have me or not, as you please." "But what is to be done?" cries the devoted member of the organization. "You cannot make Religion as attractive as Pleasure. No amount of dressing up will do that. Look at the Gospel presentation of it. Is it not, as one of its preachers declares, as offensive as possible? No artist can make the Cross an object to be embraced. No; the fault, if fault there is, is in not making the disciplinary side plainer and more severe. Let the contrast with the world's offer be as sharp as possible. Make your rules and take care that they are kept, and you will have religious force even if it is restricted."

The answer is plain. It is true the Gospel comes to us in the shape of a Cross, but never apart from its Founder. Christ can make, as He has made, even the Cross attractive; and He can make, as He has made. Religion attractive in spite of the world's tempting offers. His service, if properly understood, is "perfect freedom." If I can tell my pleasure-loving companion that all the opportunities he values are mine as freely as they are his, but that in my Religion I have found a Friend Who makes them much more attractive and more permanently interesting; One Who doubles my enjoyment in work, and will never, if I follow His advice, allow me to spend a dull hour; One Who

quickens the imagination, stimulates the intellect and braces the will ; One Who throws over nature and art, over the world and man, a subtle, inexplicable charm ; One Who, in spite of His position as King of kings, has shewn by word and act a strange regard for me, and a still stranger desire for my regard for Him ; One Who is present in indefinable ways in every act of worship, so that the Church to the man with eyes open is “aflame with God” ; One Who is to my friend all that He is to me :—if I can make this clear, then I have dethroned the formidable rival, made it my King’s willing slave, and shewn my friend that in spite of his full and interesting life he has yet to learn the romance of living. This I conceive to be Vital Religion, for it means Life : Life emotional and intellectual, Life more and more abundant, Life that is proved to be Life in the market place as well as in the Church, in Society as well as in the secret chamber, Life that never fails, that is really eternal, for it flows out of Perfect Love into the Ocean of the Love of God. And so we use this day’s Collect with great hope : “O Almighty God, Whom truly to know is everlasting life ; grant us perfectly to know Thy Son Jesus Christ to be the Way, the Truth, and the Life ; that, following the steps of Thy holy Apostles, Saint Philip and Saint James, we may steadfastly walk in the way that leadeth to eternal life ; through the same Thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord.”

*S. Philip and S. James.*

*May 1, 1902.*

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

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This is life eternal, that they should know . . . Him Whom Thou didst send, even Jesus Christ.—*S. John xvii. 3.*

“THIS one thing is the first and last they learned of him, that the personal friendship of Jesus Christ our Lord was that gift which God was incarnate to bestow on every man who sought it. And the second thing to which he turned ever more and more, with a trust more full of awe and yet ever more full of resolute confidence, was the thought that that Personal Friend would come again to judge the world.”\* Such are the words with which Archbishop Benson sums up the teaching of Prince Lee, his schoolmaster, for whom his son tells us he had a reverence as for “a character almost divine.”

“The personal friendship of Jesus Christ our Lord.” “A gift to every man who sought it.” At first we hardly take in the offer, and immediately we begin to take it in we qualify it; we assume that it must mean something less than what it says. Friendship, we say, that same relationship that I have with so and

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\* “*Life of Archbishop Benson,*” by his son, A. C. Benson,  
vol. i., p. 41.

so, that intimate fellowship which enables me to dispense with formalities, to be perfectly at home, where all is understood and a fuller knowledge only brings fuller joy and a more perfect freedom. Is it this that is offered, and offered by the King of kings and Lord of lords? It may be that we have been denied the friendship of the great or the famous; we have never personally known the men whose biographies we read and admire: our friendships have been on a lower plane. But we should have liked to have known them: the great poet, a Wordsworth, a Tennyson, a Browning: the great statesman, a Pitt or a Gladstone; the philanthropist, a Wilberforce or a John Howard; the divine, a Wesley, a Pusey, a Maurice, a Westcott! Yes, we say, how fortunate were the friends of these good men, to have their esteem, their thought, their affection, to receive visits or letters from them, to be remembered on their birthdays, to be helped in their difficulties, consoled in their sorrows, to feel that their homes were always open to them, that they would never be unwelcome, never strangers, to have their great gifts always at command. Yes, such friendships must have been rich and valuable, but they are not ours, and never will be; we must be and are content with those we have.

But here we have the offer of the personal friendship of Christ. How is it that it moves us so little? How is it that it fails to send the same thrill through us as an invitation from some great and good man in our neighbourhood? We remember how flattered we felt when we were told that one occupying a high position in the county, of wide influence, whose good name was in every one's mouth, wanted to see and know us, and that he had promised to visit us. We were quite moved

by the news, and the only shadow that fell on our hopes and expectations was occasioned by the dread lest we should disappoint him. And yet, as I say, the offer of the friendship of Christ affects us quite differently. Why? Is it less interesting? Impossible! Who could say that? Is it, then, less real? Perhaps this is the main reason. The proposed friendship seems purely imaginary, like that which we might seek to establish with some great historical character who has passed away whom we can neither see nor hear, a friendship maintained entirely by faith, a friendship that would seem to be all on one side, namely, ours; for all the effort, the sacrifice, the countless acts that go to make fellowship will come from us. What is there, we ask, that answers to our friend's visit, to the cheering tone of his voice, to the inspiration that comes with him? To have Christ in our home but for the inside of one day would last us a lifetime, but that we can never expect. Are we not right, therefore, in saying that this of which Prince Lee was so full is less real than, in fact has no analogy with what we understand of earthly friendships?

Now, without answering all the questions here raised, some of which we hope to discuss later, we will content ourselves with suggesting two thoughts which will at least shew that the subject is a practical one. The one is, that the knowledge of Christ is set down in the Scriptures as the purpose of all that we call life; and the other, that the ignorance of Christ is set down as the all-sufficient reason for exclusion from the happiness of the life hereafter. It may be said that we are not talking of knowledge, but of friendship; but there is practically no difference. The real knowledge of a good man means his friendship, for he will not make himself

known except to his friends. If we know Jesus Christ we are amongst His friends, must necessarily be so.

We need not discuss that further, but at once proceed to our first statement, that the purpose of life is the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Our Lord declares this in that moving prayer which He made on the eve of His Passion: "This is life eternal, that they may know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou didst send." Life eternal, *i.e.*, that power within us which death cannot touch, which is immortal, is manifested in the reaching out after the knowledge of the true God and Jesus Christ. It lies, as Bishop Westcott taught us, "not so much in the possession of a completed knowledge as in the striving after a growing knowledge. The *that* expresses an aim, an end, and not only a fact."\* The words are not so difficult as they seem. All that we call life consists in the pursuit of knowledge. The life of business derives its chief interest from the knowledge of men and things with which the merchant is brought into contact; the life of an artizan or labourer is full or poor in proportion as he seeks to know his trade or his husbandry; the life of a physician exhilarates or palls in proportion as the knowledge of the body and its mysterious organism claims his attention. Life is always felt in the pursuit of knowledge, and interest only begins to flag when its limits seem to be reached. And personal knowledge is much more engrossing and exciting than the knowledge of things. When the thing that has for many years claimed our attention is identified with a person, then we realize how difficult it is to rein ourselves in. The poet who finds the knowledge of nature or men concen-

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\* *The Speaker's Commentary. Gospel according to S. John, xvii. 3.*

trated, as it were, in some person, some man or woman, feels that his desire to know takes a wonderful leap. We have Browning finding the object of his quest embodied in Elizabeth Barrett, and therewith a fuller, stronger life. We find the young artist or scholar discovering in some older friend all, or what seems to him all, that he had been seeking through pictures or books, and rejoicing in the fuller life that the new personal character of knowledge gives him. And so, too, on the other hand, knowledge begins to lose its interest, *i.e.*, its life, when its relationship with a person is no longer seen. So Browning has shewn us in a masterly way in his poem, "Easter Day." The man whom the Divine Judgment has excluded from heaven finds to his amazement that instead of the hell he expected, he is condemned to the knowledge of the world he loved, a knowledge, however, without any personal relationship. He is given the knowledge of things, a whole world of things to know and find out about. Nay, he is given art, and a mind to know art as well as nature. The Divine Judgment consists only in limitation—the limitation of things to what they mean in themselves, without any relation to a person. At first the situation seems delightful.

I breathed free : to my heart, back fled  
The warmth. "But all the world!" I said.  
I stooped and picked a leaf of fern,  
And recollect I might learn  
From books how many myriad sorts  
Of fern exist, to trust reports  
Each as distinct and beautiful  
As this the very first I cull.  
Conceive then earth's resources ! Vast  
Exhaustless beauty, endless change  
Of wonder !

But he soon discovers that the wonders of nature and art apart from their connection with a person pall and sicken. He longs for love.

Then I—“Behold my spirit bleeds,  
Catches no more at broken reeds—  
But lilies flower those reeds above :  
I let the world go, and take love !  
Love survives in me, albeit those  
I love be henceforth masks and shows,  
Not loving men and women.”

It is not, then, difficult to understand that eternal life is seen and known in its desire after personal knowledge, and reaches its fullest measure in the personal knowledge of God and Jesus Christ Whom He sent. Once this is abandoned as unreal, unpractical, imaginative, then the flow of eternal life is dammed and the soul of man becomes dry and parched. With this before us, the only question, surely, that remains to be considered is this: Can we know God? Can we know Jesus Christ?

But in order that its practical importance may be still more fully demonstrated, look at it from the negative point of view. We have seen that our real life is measured by it; we are now to see that to be without it means of necessity exclusion from the new life. “The door was shut.” These words, amongst the most terrible in Holy Scripture, are used of professing Christians whose only fault was, alas!—an irreparable one—they were not known. Our Lord teaches the awful truth it enshrines in a parable, that of the Ten Virgins. These Virgins had all gone forth to meet the Bridegroom and accompany Him to the wedding feast, but only five were admitted. The others were excluded, not because they were wicked or immoral, but for a reason which would obtain to-day in like circumstances—they were strangers.

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When they entreated to be allowed to enter the bright home of the festivities, the voice of the Bridegroom was heard saying, "Verily I say unto you, I know you not." This admitted of no appeal, and they were excluded.

There are certain intimacies, a wedding festivity is one of them, in which it is impossible to admit strangers. If one should urge that the rebuke is not "Ye know Me not," but "I know you not," the reply is that the latter includes the former. In one sense, of course, Christ knows every one through and through, as it was said during His earthly life, He knew what was in man. In another sense, He only knows those who know Him. Personal knowledge is, and must be, mutual. It may be said, however, that the parable, whilst mentioning this, does not lay stress upon it, but rather on the lack of oil for the lamps. That is true, but, when carefully regarded, this only makes the matter we are discussing the more plain. It is clear that the lamps and vessels signify all those outward actions which distinguish Christians from others; they refer to the ceremonial side of the Christian life. It is obvious that one danger which besets what we may call the ritual side of our religious life is the supposition that in itself, independent of its aim or spirit, it is sufficient. The teaching of the parable shews, however, that the value of these outward forms depends upon the life by which they are fed. And this life—the power of the Holy Ghost—is rich or poor according to the attitude of the soul towards our Lord. Directly the reading of the Scriptures, the ceremonial of the Church, the offering of the Eucharist are regarded as ends in themselves, they lose their life and power, and are no longer able to impress even the world with a sense of their beauty.

That our Lord felt that there was considerable

danger, not only in outward forms but in religious works losing their vitality through missing their end and object, is plain not only from this parable, but from other words of His given in the Sermon on the Mount.\* Many, He said, would demand admission into the new Kingdom on the ground that they had preached in His name, cast out devils, and done many wonderful works, but these claims He would put aside with the words, "I never knew you." It would seem that nothing that we do is of permanent value unless it leads, indirectly or directly, to a further knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ. The subject, then, that we are discussing is a very practical one. Our life here and our life hereafter depend upon our realization of it.

It is not necessary to pursue the matter any further in this chapter; it is sufficient to have shewn from our Lord's testimony how highly He rates it, how all-important He feels it to be. We have not yet said anything as to its character beyond that which the word Friendship gives. We have chosen this word as being simple and easily intelligible. It may be that some other word or phrase could be found which would embrace more of the thoughts contained in the conception. This is not, however, important. *The* really important matter is: Are we growing in the knowledge of the Lord? Is He more to us than He was? Perhaps in no age does the question demand such attention as in our own. It is not that men are careless about knowledge: on the contrary, they are eager in the pursuit of it; but the many are content to pursue it without reference to the living God. They suppose that the addition of that great subject to the object of their

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\* S. Matt. vii. 22-23.

search will embarrass it, that their profession, business, trade will be the better without it. So far as nine-tenths of their life is concerned, it is of little or no moment whether the Incarnation and the Atonement are facts or fictions. They prefer to do their work within the limits of a narrow horizon; and this is the horror of it, they may wake up in another state of existence to find that the opportunities here given can never be repeated and that they have missed their chance. They are like children who do their daily tasks with an eye to an immediate reward, but with no knowledge as to the part these same tasks will play in the world of life; or like the clerks in a great bank, who do their separate duties conscientiously and with some little interest, but without any conception of the relationship that their own departments have to the banker's plans. They are servants, faithful servants it may be, but always servants, very rarely rising to the position of friends. And it may be that our one opportunity of knowing Christ as a Friend is given us in this life. Countless opportunities of service may be found in the next, but friendship may be denied. And yet it is this to which our Lord calls us, to which He would lead us. "Henceforth," He said to the men who had been in and out with Him for nearly three years, "I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you."\* They were friends because they were admitted to share His secrets and His plans, and, being so admitted, they felt that their little daily duties were linked to His great schemes and were a part of them. They at once became

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\* S. John xv. 15.

honourable and important, as the general's servant, who is his master's friend as well as servant, feels the care of his horse to be of consequence ; or the organ blower, who has a loving insight into the musician's mind, the attention to the bellows. They were not like men who worked separately at allotment gardens, competing one with another, but like builders in the one great city, the Maker and Founder of which was God. What a lift such a discovery gave to their lives. It is precisely such a lift that most men need to-day, a lift secured by the personal knowledge of Christ.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST—WHAT IT IS.

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The excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus.—*Phil.* iii. 8.

WE have seen that the knowledge of Christ is all important. It is now our duty to inquire more closely than we have yet done into its nature. What do we understand by the personal knowledge of Christ?

In the first place, we may set aside what it is not. It is not knowledge about Christ. It is not the knowledge that Christ was born in Bethlehem some nineteen hundred years ago, and was crucified at Jerusalem when He was about thirty-three years of age. It is not the knowledge that He worked many miracles, and rose again the third day from the dead. It is not even the knowledge that He was Divine. I may indeed know all the facts of the Creed, and yet not know Him; just as I may know all the circumstances and events of the great man who lives in my neighbourhood, without passing even into the circle of his acquaintances. The knowledge of a person implies so much more than the mere acquaintance with certain events in his life, that it may be said that we can pass to the former without the latter. Neither S. John nor S. Andrew could have

known much about our Lord when they had their first interview with Him, and yet they knew Him from that hour with a certainty which admitted of no doubt. The difference between intellectual knowledge about anyone and spiritual knowledge of him is almost as wide as that between acquaintanceship and friendship. But whilst we recognise this, we find it very difficult to explain clearly the distinction. It may be said roughly to consist in this, that whilst the intellectual knowledge of the facts about our friend tells us what he has been and is to others, the spiritual knowledge tells us what he is to us. The one is hearsay, the other is personal experience. In the one case we infer certain things; we judge that he is likely to say this or that, to behave in this way or that; but in the other we pass beyond inference to actual knowledge. We say, "I know he would say this," or "It is impossible he could say that; I know him too well for that."

Now, from this it is plain that personal knowledge implies self-revelation. I can only know that person who chooses to reveal himself to me. I may be in his presence several hours during each day, and for six days in each week, and yet at the end of ten years know him no better than the servant who brushes his clothes. The presence of a person is not like the presence of a fact on which we can exercise our thought, and feel that we have learnt all that there is to learn about it. Unless there is self-revelation, we are almost as far off from knowing the person as though we had never seen him.

The personal knowledge of our Lord implies, then, a willingness on His part to communicate Himself to us, a readiness to speak or act in such ways to us individually as may lead to knowledge. In this, as we know,

lies the chief difficulty in our knowing those whose position, character, or gifts attract us. We may have the opportunity of meeting them, of being with them alone, but we find they are not interested in us, and have no mind to let us know them. We ask, almost with bated breath, Would it be so with Him? Is it so with Him? Disparity in mind or position is one of the barriers which prevent mutual knowledge in the world; and in the case of our Lord the disparity, of course, is enormous, not merely in His position as King of kings, as Holiest amongst the holy, Wisest amongst the wise, but as Creator. "By Him we were made." Is it likely, then, that He will condescend to such infinite depths as to tell me of His own relationship to me? We have indeed heard stories of princes or nobles bestowing their friendship on those of low degree, but in any reliable cases of the kind the disparity has been like that described in the Lord of Burleigh, one of position rather than of mind. We have heard of the confidences Christian masters have given to their Christian servants, but here again there is no such barrier as that which sin raises between the Holy and unholy. In fact, the more we consider it, the more impossible it seems to be. A revelation to the world is not so hard to suppose. We have seen, in the letters of our late Queen, how a great sovereign will reveal her heart to her subjects scattered throughout a wide empire. England knew and loved the Queen, and the men and women of England shared in that knowledge ; but it was not the knowledge that some of her Balmoral tenants had, certainly not that enjoyed by her friends. It was not personal. Now, it is this personal revelation to each individual in the world that we are now concerned with; and we ask, What assurance can we have that it will

be made to us? Fortunately, the Scripture leaves us in no doubt on this all-important question.

In the first place, the Incarnation of the Son of God of itself makes such a revelation probable. It would be making a large assumption to say that this universe contains no other self-conscious and sentient beings beyond the angels and those who have lived on this earth. We know our planet to be a mere speck in the universe, our great solar system to be only one of many; why are we then to suppose that from the vast spaces surrounding our system and planet there arises no appeal to, no praise of, the Lord of the Universe? And if there be other beings, then, in the very selection of our earth as His temporary home, in the very selection of our humanity as the nature to be taken up into God, we have a prophecy of individual self-revelation. Having so far condescended for the race, He will not stay there, but condescend to the individuals composing it. And the Gospels confirm the expectation. Again and again, under one figure or another, that of the prodigal, the lost sheep, the lost coin, He declares His interest in the individual. The ninety-nine are left for the one, the nine are left for the one, the elder son is for the time left for his wasteful brother.

In the second place, the story of His life makes it certain. Great as is the attraction of the Lord, vast as are the crowds that follow Him, the individual is never lost sight of. Out of the disciples there is selected an inner circle of twelve, and out of them a chosen body of three. S. John, S. Peter, S. James, S. Mary, S. Mary Magdalene are all examples of the pains our Lord took to make Himself known. And not only these, but all the twelve, save Judas, are His friends. So He calls them. "Greater love hath no man than

this, that he lay down his life for his friends. Ye are My friends."\* And that they may not suppose that the title is an empty compliment, He, as we have seen, explains it by saying that He has given them this name because He has kept no secrets from them. All that He heard from His Father He made known to them. Otherwise He would have used the word "servants," for servants do not share the confidences of their master. If any further proof were necessary, it would be found in the fact that not only did our Lord give personal names to some of His followers, but that to one was allowed that close intimacy which we express by the term "bosom friend," and which was then expressed by the position he was permitted to assume, that of leaning on his Master's breast.

Of course, it may and will be said that these are exceptional cases; but if we press this to mean what it ordinarily means, namely, that our Lord had partialities, was drawn more to one than another, we must at once qualify it. We are constantly told that God is no respecter of persons, and therefore all that we can admit in explanation of S. John's closer intimacy is that he sought more and therefore found more; or, to put it in another way, that he gave a larger response to our Lord's love, and had therefore a greater freedom, the natural consequence of greater confidence.

May we, therefore, say that our Lord is ready to discover Himself with the same unreserve to any one of the millions of Christians now on this earth as to S. John or S. Peter, the same conditions being present? How can we reply "No," when we must confess that we are all in precisely the same relation to Him. Nay, the

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\* S. John xv. 13.

relationship established by baptism must be even closer than that of the Apostles before they received the gift of His Spirit after the Resurrection. And yet we hesitate. The privilege seems too high, and, shall we not add, too universal.

There are, however, happily two considerations which must, if dwelt upon, remove all further doubt. The first is the duty which is laid by Him on every conscience of love to Him and the Father. Again and again does this appear, sometimes in a negative way, failure to love Him first, above those united by the closest natural ties, being regarded as a proof of unworthiness; at other times, in a positive way, as securing the greatest blessings: "He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will *love him, and will manifest Myself to him.*"\*

Now this duty, as the words we have quoted plainly shew, carries with it "self-manifestation." In the first place, it shews that we are loved, for we never ask the love of anyone for whom we do not care; nay, the love of a person to whom we are indifferent would be distasteful to us. In the second place, it cannot exist without response. I cannot love a picture or a statue, no matter how beautiful they may be; I can only love that which, whilst I am loving it, is feeding my love with a growing revelation of beauty and with manifestations of affection. The duty, "Thou shalt love," which we must remember is put first as the great commandment, and which lies on every conscience, carries me at once within the circle of the disciples. Their love is not more earnestly asked than mine; and the promise, "I will manifest Myself," is not given to any one of them with more assurance than it is given to me.

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\* S. John xiv. 21.

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To that first consideration, which carries weight with it, we may add this, which may serve as an explanation of this self-manifestation. Though it is true that

That love is false which clings to love  
For selfish sweets of love,

yet love must find something on which it can fasten. There must be something in each human being which, in spite of the sin that covers it, is attractive to our Lord. That "something" we believe to be personal individuality. We have often been struck with the marvellous variety of human faces, no two, not even those of twins, being quite alike; but the variety of characters is still more striking. Each man has something in his make-up distinct from that which is found anywhere else. There is, however, one place, we believe, where that is found, and that place is Jesus Christ. "In Him" we were all created, and in Him, therefore, we are all found. Separated off from one another as we are by a peculiarity, an unlikeness that no one quite understands, we are not separated off from Him. He has it though no one else has; and it is because He has it, and not only because He made us, that He can rightly claim a love prior to that which we owe to husband or wife, parent or child. It is because He has it that He understands us as no one else does, and, on the principle that like loves like, cares for us as no one else does.

That individuality, then, which we are apt to tire of, to change if possible by imitation, is the link that binds the soul to his Saviour. There is one indication of this truth in the Bible. There is a promise in the message to the Church in Pergamos which has a characteristic mark of individuality in it nowhere else

found. It is this: "To him that overcometh will I give of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knoweth but he that receiveth it."\* There is no occasion to enter here upon any question as to what is meant by the "white stone"; the point we are pressing is quite clear. Between the man who overcomes and his Lord there is a secret shared by no one else, and this secret is spoken of as a "new name." Now a name is the expression of character, and a name given by Christ must exactly express the character it marks. We seem, then, to have here a promise that the man who has battled faithfully will have revealed to him that connection which exists between himself and the Lord alone. It is a new name, because his old earthly names have never been able to mark that hidden personality which has so often indeed eluded his own observation. A time will, however, come when he will see, with what joy and pride we need not say, that the self he distrusted, feared, rebuked has its glorious counterpart in the Lord Himself, Who now reveals in the new name not only the inherent value of his soul, but its union with Himself.

Enough has now been said to shew, not only that the personal knowledge of Christ is a mutual knowledge, but that it is the glorious privilege held out to every son of man. To us, as to S. John, S. Paul, or S. Peter, He will reveal Himself in all the wonderful tenderness and majesty of His character, if we will but observe the conditions of such knowledge. What these conditions are it will be the duty of the following chapters to inquire and discuss.

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\* Rev. ii. 17.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE COST OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST.

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I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge.—  
*Phil.* iii. 8.

THE man who wrote these words knew by personal experience what loss is. He had lost everything that we count dear. Some thirty years before this he had, as the accredited representative of the Jewish Sanhedrin, the opportunity of considerable wealth, but so completely had he lost this that when he wrote this letter he was, as he tells us, dependent on his Philippian converts for the means of subsistence. But we value health more than wealth. Yet this, too, we must believe S. Paul had sacrificed. It is true that he does not say much of his sufferings, yet we know that he had gone through unparalleled hardships and pains. It is certain that the repeated scourgings and beatings, the stoning, the labours, the imprisonments, the journeys, the varied perils of which he speaks in his second letter to the Corinthians must have permanently affected his health. He who bore in his body “the marks of the Lord Jesus” was probably never free from bodily pain. Moreover, he had lost not only money and health, but reputation. He was once highly thought of. In this particular he could look back and claim for

himself distinctions that the average man was without. His birth, education, social position and zeal had won for him not only a position of confidence amongst the aristocrats of his nation, but amongst the Jews generally. In this letter he refers to these natural advantages ; not, however, with the purpose of boasting of them, but rather that he might give added point to the reality of his sacrifice. Now, at this time, he who was once so highly esteemed, so popular, is the best hated man in Asia and Europe, and he who once had so many friends is compelled to write that he has no man like-minded with him.

Poverty, pain, obloquy are marks of a great loss ; it seems as though nothing could be added ; and yet liberty is perhaps dearer than all. We are so accustomed to it that it is hard to realize circumstances in which we are deprived of it, difficult to imagine how chafed and fretted we should be if we could no longer go where or when we pleased, if we were confined to four walls, could only see those whom our jailer allowed. Yet not only was this the Apostle's condition, but he suffered the additional trial of never being alone. Day and night he was chained to a Roman soldier ; day and night he had to suffer the companionship of a rough, coarse, and rude man who would probably despise and hate him.

S. Paul, then, had lost everything. Some men may know of the loss of money, or of friends, or of health, but how few there are who have known so complete a loss as this which the Apostle experienced. And there is this further fact that is remarkable about the sacrifice : it was not forced from him. At any time he could have resumed his liberty, got back his fortune, recovered his reputation if not his health. He made this sacrifice

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willingly, of his own mind. And this not because, like some Eastern devotee, he might attain some high peak of sanctity from which he could look down with pride on those who were grovelling amongst earthly things. He had something better in view than that. S. Paul was no spendthrift, throwing away great blessings for a little temporary applause. He valued health, and bade his young fellow labourer be careful of it ; he valued, too, the privileges of independence and popular esteem, and had no intention of parting with them except in the hope of getting something better. But this he felt he had obtained. Looking back over thirty years, during which time he had lost these blessings, he has no regret, is still of the same mind. "Yea, and I (still) count all things but loss." The return had evidently been satisfactory, was evidently worth more than what he had spent to gain it. What was it? In his first statement he writes shortly, "Christ"; in his second, he explains it by the words, "The excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."

Our first feeling is, to speak frankly, one of surprise. We ask ourselves whether we should be prepared to sacrifice any one of these four great blessings for the sake of the knowledge of Christ. Are we ready to give up our independence, to become dependent on the charity of others, for the sake of the knowledge of Christ, provided we can obtain it on no other terms? Are we ready to become chronic sufferers, if we learn that we can only know Christ in that way? Are we ready to face unpopularity, to be hated by our old friends, to be looked on not only as misguided, but as dangerous, if that is the only path to this knowledge? Most of us hesitate. We hope we should do it, but we do not feel sure. Any one of these items is a large

price to pay for knowledge. Of course we should for salvation; our future happiness or misery is directly involved there. But knowledge? No; we remain uncertain.

And yet we remember that we have paid very high prices for knowledge. The knowledge of letters, that most elementary knowledge, has not been purchased without the loss of money, time, and perhaps tears. Do we regret it? Do we not wish that we had spent more lavishly? Could we think of resigning that knowledge by which we learn day by day what the world is doing, by which we learn what it has done in the past? Should we not be immeasurably vexed and mortified if we were obliged, like our ancestors, to be dependent on what others reported to us? No, the knowledge is far more valuable than what we gave for it: our only regret is that we are confined to one, two, or three languages, instead of being able to read the thoughts of all mankind. We have the same feeling with regard to the knowledge of art. The music we know, the skill we have in drawing or painting, is worth far more than we ever gave for it. Surely a little thought will quickly convince us that knowledge is one of the few investments which bring us a much larger return than we expected. And so far from esteeming those foolish who have lost health or social advantages in pursuit of knowledge, we consider them wise and good, for they have not only enriched themselves, but others. We see Palissy, the potter, heaping upon his furnace his tables, chairs and furniture, and we admire the sacrifice that won for us the secret of the enamel. We see Darwin shutting his mind off from subjects in which he was once interested in order that he may concentrate his energies on his one pursuit, and we reverence his spirit of devotion whilst we regret

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that the highest knowledge of all seems to have been undiscovered.

For, as we have already seen, there is a higher knowledge than that of things, and that the knowledge of persons. Indeed, the knowledge of things is chiefly valuable because it leads to that of persons. The words friendship and love express to us what that knowledge is. We cannot imagine Tennyson writing an "In Memoriam" on the loss of a library. The knowledge of a person awakens response, kindles the flame of interest and affection. And the more beautiful the character of the person, the more deeply we are interested in knowing it. It is a natural instinct that leads the soul to seek to know the great and noble, and it only becomes contemptible when servile methods are adopted for obtaining it. Such a search carries with it expectation and hope. To be admitted to know the really great, the mind of a S. Paul or a S. John, of a Shakespeare or Milton, of a Bayard or Gordon, to know them, to become their friends, share their thoughts, would be a wonderful enrichment to our lives. We should be content with the knowledge of much less eminent people. All this goes without saying. What is not so obvious, or, in any case, what we habitually forget, is that this kind of knowledge needs sacrifice also.

"Friendship ! All like the purchase, but who the price will pay?" Why should we pay any price? we ask. Ought not friendship, and the knowledge that underlies it, to be the spontaneous response to our self-revelation? Is it worth anything if it is not? If my friend will not allow me to know him unless my earnestness in the matter is first proved by numberless acts of devotion and sacrifice, is his friendship worth the search? So we are apt to argue; but a little thought will convince us

that we are wrong. The knowledge of a person differs from the knowledge of a thing in this, that it is a complex process. The living person can baffle us in a way that nature, with her uniformity of law, cannot. He does not care to be known to all the world ; he will hide himself from the gaze of the foolish or impertinent ; he will not reveal himself to the eye of the stranger. He needs to be assured of our motives, whether we are seeking him for what he is or for what he has. Study, thought, patience are obviously necessary. But not only these things : we must be in sympathy with his mind, care for the things that he cares about, have similar tastes and interests. And this means, very often, considerable self-sacrifice : and the better a man is, the more self-discipline is needed in order to know him. So far, then, from supposing that it is easier, involves less time, labour, and self-sacrifice to know a person than to know a language or science, the contrary is the case. And this is the reason why only a few friendships are open to any one : there is no time for more. It is also the reason why so many marriages which promised so well have turned out comparatively failures. In the early days, sacrifice on both sides was constant, and sacrifice always brings fresh knowledge ; but after marriage it was supposed that the mutual knowledge would grow apace without it, and so the growing friendship and love faded away into acquaintanceship.

From what we have said, it is clear that all knowledge demands sacrifice, and the knowledge of persons is more exacting than the knowledge of things. We are, then, in complete accord with S. Paul's principle. And if we look at the application, can there be any doubt as to his wisdom ? His complete sacrifice of all was not

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for a thing, but a Person, and that Person the very highest. Amongst all the men he had ever met in his long and varied experience there was no one who had awakened the same vehement desires and expectations as the Person of Jesus Christ. Amongst all the visions of attractive loveliness that earth or heaven had disclosed to him, none had been so strangely enticing as the Vision on the way to Damascus. From that moment all persons, all subjects lost their interest, except so far as they were associated with Him. All desirable knowledge was focussed in Jesus Christ. In Him were hidden all "the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."\* "That I may know Him"† was the one passionate desire of his heart.

But it was plain from the very outset that this would mean struggle, pain and loss. To know One Who never thought of Himself, never pleased Himself, Who when on earth went about doing good, would and must mean sacrifice, for that was the root principle of His mind. Again, to know One Who was invisible, Who could only be known through revelations in life, would mean of necessity certain circumstances which would, as it were, make these revelations natural. In other words, difficulties, trials, hardships, when S. Paul would be necessarily thrown on his Friend, would be the most likely conditions of knowledge. This, too, would involve loss. Then, again, the extraordinary loftiness and greatness of His character, Who is God as well as Man, would mean all that sacrifice which attends self-purification, penitence, and strivings after holiness. If we must concentrate to know a language, an art, a science; if we must put out all the forces of our mind to know a person, and if,

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\* Col. ii. 3.

† Phil. iii. 8.

in proportion as that person is noble and saintly in character, our study must be more and more severe, what must not the knowledge of Christ involve? As Mr. Illingworth says: "It is obvious that in proportion to the awfulness of His Personality, this desire" (*i.e.*, to know Him) "must be both intense and sincere. We have already seen the impossibility of trifling with a natural or moral science, or a human friendship, and the seriousness with which they must be approached; and it will hardly be denied that to trifle with the study of the Infinite Source of all things must be yet more impossible still."\* And he notes three qualifications as necessary for this study, all of which demand sacrifice.

In the first place, the desire must be sincere. There must be no selfish motive mixed up with our study. We must not seek to know Him for any worldly advantage or gain, but for His own sake. The wife who makes her household management her chief concern, and only seeks the knowledge of Him in order that she may better compass it, will find that neither is satisfactory. The husband who, in his affectionate regard for his family, concentrates his mind upon his business, and only seeks to know Christ that he may be kept straight, will find the personal Christ fading away into some abstract conception of duty, which fails when a really strong demand is made upon it. The priest who, in his devotion to the Church and her interests, in his ambition that she may meet with success all the problems of the age, only seeks to know Christ in order that he may be wise enough to direct her aims, will find that the work is in danger of becoming mere routine, a department of ethics, instead of the manifestation of a

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\* Illingworth: *Personality, Human and Divine*, p. 120.

living Person. Intensity is necessary, intensity in the sense of concentrating all our powers on Him and His character, that we may know Him for His own sake, and not for what the knowledge may bring.

In the second place, the desire must be intense enough to counterbalance the multitude of desires which conflict with it. We live in an age when not only business and study, but books and magazines, games and innocent recreations, society and travel make imperious claims upon our time. We are hurried from one pursuit to another, and rather enjoy the excitement which the quick changes bring. To stay, "be still and know God," seems impossible. We therefore drift on and on in the comfortable presumption that eternal life will be in a large measure the continuance of the present; that there is no reason, so far as we can see, why there should be any violent change; that "the angel faces we have loved long since and lost awhile" will be there to smile upon us, that we shall meet with the same kind of welcome that we should find on going to the colonies; and that the judgment men talk of will be very much what an examination is here, a determination of the particular place in heaven where we shall do best. And then a sudden change, a serious loss, or an illness makes life different. We are left alone, and realize something of the loneliness of that going forth whither we know not. We long to be certain of a Friend then, for the sake of the one we have lost, if not for our own sake. We stretch out our hands. A new desire fills heart and mind, which begins to overmaster all other desires. We long to know Jesus Christ. But why should it have been born of pain and loss? Why not develop it now, and find in life's happiness a sign of His Presence? How often the reply is: "It will mean trouble, and I have enough

without it." Yes, it will mean trouble, for the knowledge of Christ demands not only concentration and sincerity, but the daily purification of character.

This is the third and chief qualification for personal knowledge. The knowledge of things, of arts and sciences, claims certain gifts which we do not all share alike, and the poor and ignorant are left behind in the race. But in the knowledge of persons, character, in which the poor are as fortunate as the rich, is of such importance that it may be said to dwarf all other qualifications and be looked upon as the one essential. We can all improve our characters ; and just in proportion as we improve, our knowledge of Christ, if that be our aim, improves. It is often found that a poor cottager, unable to do more than read his Bible, has a closer and clearer sight of the Lord than the scholarly and intellectual landlord whom he serves.

All this clearly shews that the personal knowledge of the Lord must involve self-sacrifice. "Affinity with a Holy Being implies a progressive and life-long effort of the will. The moral virtues, . . . seen to be necessary for success in science, are departmental, and do not cover the whole range of conduct ; some are needed and others not. But to know a Person who is perfectly holy, we must focus our entire moral character upon Him. . . . Such an effort of the will is not easy either of attainment or of maintenance."\*

"I count all things but loss." We are not, it may be, asked for health, freedom, money, or reputation. It may not be demanded of us, as it was of S. Paul, that we should make a clean sweep of all that life offers. Perhaps it is only the sacrifice of time, or undesirable

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\* Illingworth : *Personality, Human and Divine*, p. 121.

friends, or personal comfort and freedom in the adoption of some rule of life which may check and prune our over-strong earthly desires. But even this demands a strong, determined will and a lofty purpose. And the question arises : Is the personal knowledge of Christ a prize of sufficient stimulus for the sacrifice it involves ? Let a man ask those who have it in any measure, or let him study the lives of those who, like S. Paul and S. John, have been filled with it. Let him mark the change which came over the narrow-minded Pharisee and the Galilean fisherman when they came under the power of it. Let him ask himself what such friendship as he has known has done for him ; and in the light of these several answers brace himself for the task that lies before him, and determine "to count all things but loss" for the surpassing worth of the knowledge of Christ.

## CHAPTER IV.

### KNOWLEDGE THROUGH THE SCRIPTURES.

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The key of knowledge.—*S. Luke xi. 52.*

WE have considered the importance of the subject we are discussing, and the claims it has upon our attention. We have also examined its character, and noticed that the only condition on which it can be obtained is self-sacrifice. We now enter upon the way of this knowledge, asking how it is to be found and what are its hindrances and difficulties.

Our first question is, What are we to start with? what is the key to the position? In seeking an answer, we go to experience. We ask, how is it that we first came to know our friend? And as we think about its first beginnings, we remember that long before we saw him we had an interest in him. We had heard of him from some friend who knew him, and he told us of all that he was to him: how he had helped him in his work, strengthened him in facing difficulty, sympathized with him when he was in trouble; and further, that he had expressed a wish to know us. This awakened curiosity and interest; and then perhaps good fortune took us to his neighbourhood, and we saw the house where he lived, the garden where he wrote and saw his friends. We felt we were getting into closer touch, and then some

one who knew him well said that as he was not at home he would take us round the house, shew us the tree under which he sat, the flowers he loved, the library with his books, the dining room and hall with his pictures, the study with innumerable photographs of places and friends. All this greatly interested us; and we felt, after we had seen everything, as though we knew him. And though we now see that the knowledge then gained, compared with what we enjoy now, was very elementary, yet we recognize that the outward was a very important help to the knowledge of the inward. It was our first step. It may be, then, that the first step to the knowledge of Christ will be through the outward, through the knowledge of His surroundings, His friends, His words and actions.

We are encouraged to believe that this is the case, because we find that it was the method He adopted with His disciples. For three years they were with Him in and out: they saw His daily ways, watched Him at prayer and at work, saw Him when He was entertaining others and when He was being entertained. They observed His wonderful patience in bearing contradiction and the singular power by which He silenced His enemies. They noticed how entirely free He was from any kind of condescension or patronage in His dealings with the poor, how He hated the very appearance of ostentation and vanity. And so, gradually, they came to know Him in an outward kind of way. He became their Master and their Lord. It is true that this was to a large extent a knowledge of Christ after the flesh; but it was a great help, a very definite step to that other knowledge which after Pentecost was to be theirs.

It may be said here that the further discussion of this is useless, as Christ is gone, and it is no longer possible

to have the wonderful privilege of hearing and seeing Him. It is true that we can neither see Him nor touch Him; but we have unsurpassed opportunities for gaining a clear conception of the outward setting of Him we seek to know.

In the first place, we have in Nature what answers to the garden and grounds of our friend. We know that it is His handiwork, and it will be very strange if our observation of it does not lead us to some clearer knowledge of Him. We can see His love of Beauty in the modest charms of the violet that hides her head beneath the grass, as well as in the brilliant splendour of the sunset. We can trace His pleasure in Order in the wonderful grouping of plants, insects and animals, as well as in the evolution of the more perfect from the less. We can see His Power in the resistless storm, the hurricane and cyclone, as well as in the still evening when He seems to be holding all in the hollow of His hand. And if we are scientific, we shall none the less appreciate these outward features of His mind; on the contrary, the very wonders with which we are brought into such close contact will only increase our sense of the marvellous wisdom by which He not only shaped, but sustains creation.

As He Himself shewed His disciples again and again, Nature bears its own witness to Him, and we are very short-sighted if we are unable to read it. We ought, then, to take every advantage of the suggestions that poets and prose writers give us, and seek in the pages of Wordsworth and Keble, of Ruskin, Shairp, and Hugh Macmillan, and many others, the stimulus which will make the dullest neighbourhood the garden of the Lord.

But we are not confined to the grounds and gardens.

Wisdom, the Divine Wisdom, has builded for Himself an House according to His promise, "Upon this rock I will build My Church." And in this House is to be found not only His own gracious Presence, but various rooms, so we may describe them, in which we may learn a great many things about Him. There we find the library He Himself used, and there also pictures and writings which tell us much, very much, about Him. There also we are able to see His servants at work ; there also the love and reverence they pay Him in their worship. The Church, then, is to the Christian what the houses of our great men are to their friends. As they tell us much that we should not otherwise know, and in various ways, small as well as great, bring us into closer touch with men who have hitherto been only a name to us, so the Church, if we move about it under sympathetic and skilful guidance, becomes a means of education whereby we are brought into the fuller knowledge of Christ.

We pass within its doors, and are at once shewn in the first room, in a series of pictures, the principles on which the garden in which we have been walking was laid out, and how its original beauty was marred, and those features which we always thought strange, and even ugly, found a place. In the same room we learn of His relationship to our first parents, and how that, too, was spoiled. There, too, we have pictures which reveal His mind in a series of contrasts. We see the terrible judgments of the flood, the plagues, the destruction of the Red Sea ; but we see also, side by side, His quiet, homely fellowship with simple men and women, shewing His delight to be with the sons of men. There are few pictures which are more engrossing than these early ones, which shew so clearly His care for the individual.

In other parts of the House we have His interest in nations pictured forth. We see groups of people, tribes and nationalities, treated as though they had individual responsibility. We find pictures which portray judgments on Egypt, on Assyria and Babylon ; and we feel, with a sense of relief, that the political life which interests us so greatly is the object of His concern. We now know that the great events of which our newspapers write affect Him as they affect us ; nay, more, for He is intimately concerned with them, and always directing them so far as the limitations imposed upon Him by His gift of free-will allow. China and Japan, then, are like the great world powers of Assyria and Babylon ; and Europe and America, Australia and New Zealand, where His Church by her manifold influences guides and governs, like the favoured land of Palestine. Passing through the halls and corridors we see, carefully preserved, the songs and poems of those who have, at various times, sung of Him or His Kingdom. The Psalms show us not only how much He has been loved and trusted, but how greatly blessed those were who clung to Him in spite of all obstacles. Some of these, and perhaps they touch us more nearly than any others, were stained with the tears of those who realized the injury they had done to Him through their sins.

Entering a room where the light was not so clear, we find ourselves amongst rolls and records which describe the longings and expectations that men have expressed respecting His coming. The details of some of these were not always easy to see, but their general meaning was clear enough. With them were placed the intellectual struggles of those who had tried to solve some of the great problems which the history of man has aroused. Their questionings were so bold that at first we were

surprised to find them in the House at all, but we learned that He regarded them as very precious, and we then knew that He not only sympathized with all those who sought the truth, but that their honest inquiries and searchings were remembered by Him and valued.

Interesting as these rooms were, they had not and could not have the same deep interest as those into which we were now admitted. We were shewn into His own study, the very workroom of the Lord Himself. On the walls were the pictures of His close friends, the men He chose to be princes in His new Kingdom. Most of these were without that outward stamp of greatness that we find in pictures of men like Socrates and Plato, Moses and Isaiah, but they were all alike distinguished for their singular simplicity and humility. They had the look of children, and yet there were firm lines about the mouth which shewed how difficult it would be to make them swerve from their loyal devotion. And about them and with them were pictures illustrating the principles of His own work. Like those of His friends, they were simple enough, picturing acts of mercy and kindness; and yet each one, we were told, was a study of some method of working which He employs now as He did then.

Away from the other rooms, apart by itself, was one into which we entered with feelings indescribable. It was the death room. On each of the four walls were pictured with extraordinary plainness the incidents of the last week of His earthly life and of the Crucifixion. This too, we learned, illustrated certain principles of His work. It was a relief to turn from this to the room which pictured victory over death. Here we saw not only His own personal victory, but the conquering march and progress of His Divine Society continued to

the very gates of Rome. And when we asked what was the secret of their triumph, we were allowed to see the letters of the men who took part in it, and we found that it was summed up in the one word "Christ."

We supposed that we had seen all, but we were told that if we climbed to the very top of the House we should see a picture not only of what had been, but of what would be; and so we saw in strange symbols, most difficult to make out, the inner history of the world, since He came to the present time. We saw something of the causes at work by which history is made.

The reader may think that we have pressed our parable too far, and that, whilst it may be freely granted that there are passages here and there in the Old Testament which refer to Christ, yet it can never be made out that it is from beginning to end a revelation of His mind and actions. If we had treated it as the history of an ancient and interesting people who were under Divine education, there would have been no room for criticism, but to change the point of view, and say that the object of the Book is to reveal the Educator rather than the educated, is to miss its significance. Now no one would deny that the Old Testament is, to use Dean Stanley's expressive phrase, a history of the Jewish Church, a history of a people chosen out of the nations to witness to God and to be the home from which the Messiah should come forth. But is this its chief significance? Is this the point to which Christ and His Apostles turn? Do they not, on the contrary, look to it as a revelation of the Son of God? "They are they," says our Lord of the Scriptures, "which testify of Me."\*

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\* S. John v. 39.

"Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself."\* "Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day."† He was the Person on Whom patriarchs, lawgivers, and prophets fastened their eyes. Abraham rejoiced to see His day; Moses wrote of Him; David in spirit called Him Lord; Isaiah saw His glory. It would be difficult to point to a single passage which shews that Christ or His Apostles used the Old Testament for any other purpose than as a testimony to the Son of God. "The *idea* of the Written Word is the Word Incarnate."

As Archbishop Magee points out in a well-known sermon: "The Jews had quite lost sight of this; they had come to regard the Scriptures as having in themselves that eternal life which was only in the Christ to Whom they testified; they searched them for life, but they searched them not for Christ, the Giver of life. And because they did this, because they had thus almost lost the idea of the Christ out of all their Scriptures, save in some few passages which seemed more expressly to foretell Him, Scripture had ceased to be light, had become darkness to them." As we read these words, we ask, Is there not the same danger to-day? In the reaction against that allegorizing of Scripture which some perhaps carried too far, the witness of the Old Testament to Christ has been largely lost, and parts of it have no longer the same interest to Christians. It was this that the Archbishop feared: "If we should come to look upon any part of that

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\* S. Luke xxiv. 27.

† S. Luke xxiv. 45-46.

Word as having no reference to Him ; as having, as the Jews thought it had, only a local and a Jewish use ; as being, in short, only a Jewish, and not also a Christian Word, we, too, like the Jews, will most assuredly misuse and misapply it, or, still more probably, reject it altogether. For this latter is the danger to which the Christian Church is more especially exposed, exactly the opposite one to that to which the Jew was liable, though arising from the same cause. The Jew who failed to see Christ in his Scriptures, trained as he was in superstitious reverence for the Word, rejected the Jesus to Whom that Word did not seem to him to testify. But the Christian, trained to believe in and worship Jesus of Nazareth, would in like case be in danger not of rejecting Him, but of despising and rejecting those portions of Scripture which seemed to have no connection with Him or His religion. The Jewish Scriptures, if divested of their reference to Christ, must have for the Christian student as little beauty that he should desire them, as Jesus of Nazareth had in the eyes of a Jewish student ; the very conception of them which gave them all their charm for the Jew, that they were Jewish and for Jews alone, tending to divest them of all interest for the Gentile Christian.”\*

Enough has been said, I hope, to justify the point of view from which Scripture is regarded in this chapter, to make it clear that its chief purpose is to help us to know about Christ. Assuming this, it may be asked, how does it effect its purpose ? In the first place, it creates an atmosphere in which Christ may be seen ; or, to use another metaphor, it prepares the plate on which the activities of Christ are to be mirrored. With many,

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\* Magee : *Christ the Light of all Scripture*, p. 5.

Christ has less to do with the world now than when He was in Palestine : the historical Christ of the Gospels is a more striking reality than the living Christ of the Acts. And with us all an effort is required before we can realize that our newspapers record day by day the results of His guidance. Even so earnest a believer as the late Dr. Dale, one who has in his sermons and books borne such noble testimony to Christ, confesses that this full conviction of the living Christ was somewhat late in reaching him ; or, rather, that he on one occasion received an added consciousness of the fact, and whilst under its power became quite excited at the thought how little his people knew it. And yet the Resurrection was all in vain if Christ be not alive and active and the acknowledged Ruler of the Universe to-day. Why, then, is there this dulness of spiritual perception, this inability to perceive the living Christ ? And the answer is, want of preparation. The world is so much with us that we are unable to see beyond its horizon. Our thoughts are practically bound by it. Now it is the duty of the Scriptures to correct this, to tell us of spiritual powers and agencies constantly active and at work ; to remind us, as it does so frequently, that neither greatness of place nor insignificance of position can absolve us from spiritual responsibility ; that our work, whether to us important or unimportant, is a part of a vast network of causes and effects which the Christ is guiding, and that He expects us to do our very best. We see, for example, the enormous influence for good wielded by the pious farmer Abraham, and we see a similar influence for bad wielded by the unprincipled King Ahab ; and the Bible shews us that the main difference between the one man and the other is that the former was sensible of a spiritual world enwrapping this, over

which One ruled Whom he sought, and the latter, ignoring that world, played only for this and lost. Such pictures, and the prose or poetry which illustrates their principles, if seen and read day by day, must have an effect over the thoughtful man, and prepare his mind for messages or signs from that spiritual world which daily becomes more and more real. He is on the look out for revelations of the Christ similar in principle to those of which he reads ; and at the end of the day, when he examines and develops the prepared plate, he finds, as the expert photographer does, much more upon it than he supposed. Quiet thought in the darkened chamber, from which the light and sounds of this world are shut out, reveals sights which surprise and cheer him.

But this is not the only purpose of Scripture. It not only prepares men to see the actions of Christ in our modern life, but it reveals the principles of His action. We become familiar with His ways ; we begin to understand how different His thoughts are from ours, His ways from ours. We recognize the righteousness of His judgments, the love that underlies His discipline, the patience that characterizes all His actions ; how He will wait for years and years before interfering ; and yet, on the other hand, how He will suddenly strike without notice or warning. And as we see Him in His actions towards others, we can realize in some way what His actions towards ourselves will be.

The Scriptures, then, are to us what our Lord describes them to be, the “key of knowledge.” They are not the knowledge itself ; that, as we have seen, is a personal communication with the living Christ ; but they open the way to that personal knowledge, and are of such importance that it is difficult to see how any one can know Christ here without them. Moral affinity, as we

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saw in the last chapter, is essential for personal knowledge ; but where shall we find such a helpful guide to the development of that moral affinity as in the teaching of the Bible ? How can we know what Christ likes without it ? How shall we learn what is distasteful to Him without it ? How shall we know what kind of men His friends are without it ? We never expect to have any real personal knowledge of a man about whose life and actions we are profoundly ignorant, and we cannot expect to have any knowledge of Christ unless we have learnt from His own Word not only what He was to His disciples, but what He has been to man ever since his creation. Knowing this, we can then hope to be able to trace His steps in history, philosophy and art. We can then find that one element which men have long searched for, and that is, the unifying principle of all knowledge, and gain a new meaning to the old words, "Christ is all, and in all."\*

But this means effort and cost. The secrets of Nature are not discovered to the indolent, to those who take no pains to study her ; so the secrets of Christ, which lie hid in His Word, will never be revealed to those who are too busy to read it, too preoccupied to care for it. We must find time, nay, make time, to get a long and quiet look at it, and then force ourselves to think about what we have read. It is, of course, from this point of view, of very little value reading it, as Matthew Arnold recommended it, for its literary beauties, or for the sake of giving us a larger historical knowledge, because that diverts us from the real quest, namely, to find out what Christ is doing now, to get hold of His principles, and learn, as S. Paul learned, how they apply to the circumstances of the world of to-day in which we live.

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\* Col. iii. 11.

## CHAPTER V.

### KNOWLEDGE BY THE HOLY GHOST.

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The Spirit of Knowledge.—*Is. xi. 2.*

**S**O far, we have seen how men may get to know *about* Christ, may find an interest in Him, a deep appreciation of His character, His life and actions ; but this is a long way from knowing Him personally, or, perhaps it would be more accurate to say, an altogether different thing. It is of high importance that men should have this, and there is no doubt that much good work has been done by those who have never got any further ; but it is not the goal that Christ proposes. Such are never more than servants. Our Lord cannot discover His secrets to them ; they can only guess at the meaning of His actions.

But it may be asked, How are we to get this personal knowledge without the advantages that the disciples had in having Christ with them in the flesh ? To go back to the analogy pursued in the last chapter : it is as though after we had seen the house and grounds of the friend we are seeking to know, we were told that we were to develop out of that scanty outside knowledge a friendship. We have heard of imaginary letters to dead authors, but we never supposed any real fellowship was obtained by them.

Now, in answering this objection, it may be well first to ask : How much would be gained by the presence of Christ in the flesh amongst us ? Should we really get to know Him better ? It is said, of course, that the Apostles, who knew Him best, got their knowledge in this way. But did they ? How well did they really know our Lord at the time of the Crucifixion ? It is not easy to say precisely, but the facts we have, seem to shew at best a very confused and imperfect knowledge. That Christ was their Messiah they had no doubt, but with this was the erroneous conviction that He was only a national Deliverer. They had no knowledge that He had as Man as intimate relations with Greece and Rome as He had with Judea. They knew, too, that He was the Son of God, but probably by this title they only meant that He was above all men in the place that He had with His Father. When He was delivered up to His enemies, they felt He was beaten ; when He died upon the Cross, they never expected to see Him again. Had any one asked them on Good Friday as to Who He was, they would have probably replied, as the two disciples going to Emmaus did, "A prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people." And we all know how very far short this falls of a true knowledge of Christ. And so far from blaming them, it is difficult to see how, under the circumstances, they could have known much more. The presence of Christ in the flesh had its disadvantages as well as its blessings, its hindrances as well as its helps. We must remember that our Lord dressed as a Jew, spoke as a Jew, and had the manners of a Jew, and yet He was really no more a Jew than a Gentile. But how was that to be found out ? Our reason is more under the sway of the outward than we care to confess. The appeal through the eye is very

powerful ; and if we saw our Lord amongst us to-day, we should at once be face to face with all the difficulties which the limitations of dress, language and manner present. Again, our Lord was often tired ; sometimes pained ; on one occasion, and probably on many others, was hungry and thirsty ; and these were valuable helps to the knowledge of Christ as bearing our afflictions and sorrows. But such sights must have seriously contradicted the disciples' consciousness of His co-equality with the Father. The truth is, the universality of our Lord's character could not be portrayed in any single outward way, and, therefore, as He Himself told them, it was expedient for Him to go away. So far, then, we see that it is difficult to be sure that our own knowledge of Christ would be increased by His sojourn amongst us.

But, whilst saying this, we do not deny the necessity for the outward. It was limited, partial, open to mis-understanding, but it was necessary. It is difficult to see how any knowledge whatever can be obtained without it. We must have the objective fact before we can receive the subjective impression which is the beginning of knowledge. But what is of more consequence than the abiding presence of the outward is the power to understand it. The outward really takes the form that our minds give it. To one man, the stream is only so much power for a water mill ; to another, it is a parable of life. To one man, a human face speaks of nothing but plainness ; to another, it is radiant with spiritual and intellectual light. We see that which we have the capacity for seeing. If our capacity be small, we see only the surface of things ; if it be large, we see what lies behind the outward, that is, more or less thoroughly. It has been most truly said

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that the difference between thorough knowledge and superficial knowledge lies not in the volume of intellectual matter taken in, but in the aim and ability to make good use of the material ; that what is needed is not quantity, but an enlarged personality. It is this that the Apostles needed. They had an abundance of material ; sufficient, and more than sufficient, as S. John tells us, to fill all the books the world could contain ; but they lacked the ability to deal with it, they needed "an enlarged personality." And it is this that our Lord promised them in the gift of the Holy Ghost. The Spirit, when He came, would not only bring to remembrance all things that the Lord had said;\* He would not only take them and declare them unto the disciples, as a master explains the truth to his pupils, but He would be in their minds and spirits, enlarging their understanding, so that they would be able to comprehend what His words and actions meant. He would not only testify to Christ, *i.e.*, direct their attention to Him at times and in places when they were not thinking of Him ; He would not only glorify Christ, *i.e.*, shew the beauty and attractiveness of His character ; but, by His indwelling Presence, He would give them the power to know Christ.

And what was promised came to pass. It is difficult to see in the Peter who stands up on the Day of Pentecost and speaks with such fulness of knowledge about his Master the man who, six weeks before, denied that he knew Him. No appearances of the risen Christ could of themselves have produced that power of interpretation which enabled him to see at one glance how the events of Pentecost were in accord with pre-

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\* S. John xvi. 14.

diction. It was all due to the power of the Spirit. And so, too, no continuance of Christ in the flesh could of itself have produced that phrase so frequently used in the New Testament as descriptive of the Christian's relationship to Christ, "In Christ." S. Peter would not have used it of others as he does, had he not known by his own experience what it meant. It meant something quite different from anything he could remember in the days of the Galilean ministry. He knew then what it was to be "with Christ," but not what it was to be "in Christ." The fellowship with the outward was changed to a fellowship with the inward. The knowledge of the outward was exchanged for a knowledge of the inward.

The Apostles, then—for S. Peter's experience was that of them all—would have been amazed at any such question as we proposed at the beginning, namely, whether we had not lost by the Ascension of our Lord a great help towards the knowledge of Him. They would have replied, "The knowledge we had of Christ in the days of His flesh was so elementary and formal, compared with our present knowledge, that we might almost say that we then never knew Him at all." Indeed, it is not improbable that they would have used S. Paul's expression to denote the change, "Even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know Him so no more."\* S. Paul seems there to refer to some knowledge of Christ in the flesh which he himself had had, some knowledge which was evidently precious, and not to be easily laid aside; for he says, "Even *though* we have known," as much as to say, "Even though I have had the great privilege of seeing that outward human form which enshrined the Son of God, yet now I know

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\* 2 Cor. v. 16.

Him so no more." Why? Because a loftier conception had taken the place of that which the outward form supplied. As he no longer recognized men after the flesh, as their outward appearance and circumstances faded away into insignificance before the greatness of their spiritual reality, so he no longer knew Christ after the flesh, for the outward fashion of Christ and the external accompaniments of His earthly life paled before the glory of the Christ he came to know. The Christ in the limitations of His humanity had disappeared in the Christ now everywhere present, penetrating the inward as well as the outward, indwelling, abiding, and so filling the individual as well as the universe that he could say, "Not I, but Christ Who dwelleth in me."

Now, from what we have said, it is quite clear that in the gift of the Holy Ghost the Apostles had all that was necessary for the personal knowledge of Christ. Every help was theirs, and that knowledge after Pentecost depended on their own personal effort, or, rather, co-operation with that new Friend, the Comforter, Who had come to make Him known. In the following chapters, we shall see in what directions these efforts were made. It is now only necessary that we should ask : Have we the same Helper? Have we now One Who can do for us what was done for them ; that is, so enlarge our personality that we can know thoroughly what we should otherwise only know superficially ; that we, contemplating the image of the living Christ as presented in the outward aspects of the Gospel, may be enabled to see not only His relation to others, but to us ; not only His interest in Judea, but England; not only His love for the society of the Apostles, but for the Catholic Church ; that we, watching, as we do, our modern life, may see in its great movements, its crises,

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its struggles, the clear marks of the Son of Man ; that we, noting the details of our own small life, may see His Hand guiding and interfering ? There can be no doubt about the answer.

The universality of the gift of the Holy Ghost was made plain from the very beginning. S. Peter, on the very day of His coming, declared the gift was for the men in the street as well as for those in the upper room ; and that there should be no doubt about His love for the heathen, the same Apostle gives it as his own experience that on one occasion, even before they entered the waters of baptism, the Roman and his friends at Cæsarea shewed that they received the very same gift that he and his fellow Apostles had received some years before. Indeed, it is constantly assumed throughout the New Testament that all Christians are partakers of the Holy Ghost. His Presence is the natural accompaniment of Holy Baptism, and the realization of it tied to faith in Christ. "Did ye not receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed ?" the Apostle asks, in some amazement, of those who had evidently shewn signs which indicated that they were without Him.\* In fact, the Christian life was begun in the Spirit.†

This, however, is so familiar that we need not labour it further. What is not so generally perceived is that the purpose of His coming was to give not only Apostles, but all men, that intimate interior knowledge of God in Christ of which we are speaking. "We received," writes the Apostle of his Corinthian converts as well as of himself, "not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, *that we might know the things*

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\* Acts xix. 2.

† Gal. iii. 2.

that are freely given to us by God."\* And those things are summed up for us in the Son Whom the Father freely gave for the life of the world.

That, then, was the purpose of the gift, knowledge. But not mere outward knowledge. S. Paul is anxious to make it quite plain that it was a knowledge of a different kind from that which every man has. He gives an illustration : "Who among men knoweth the things of a man," *i.e.*, who knows the motives, the hidden secret springs that determine a man's actions ? "Who, save the spirit of the man which is in him?" Well, then, as that kind of intimate knowledge of a man's inner nature is only known to himself, so the intimate knowledge of God is only known to the Spirit of God and to those to whom He reveals it. It is this that explains the passage which creates so many difficulties, I mean that one in which S. Paul declares plainly that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God."† How is this? men ask. Does not the ordinary man who makes no claim to any special illumination of the Holy Ghost, nay, who would repudiate it, does he not know what is meant by the Christian creed in precisely the same way as he knows what is meant by the Mohammedan or Buddhist creeds? Yes, it is true that he may know these creeds, and in precisely the same way. The intellect can take in the phrases, understand their logical meaning, supply illustrations as to their force, but it cannot penetrate behind the setting, understand their real value and efficacy. This interior knowledge is only given through the Holy Ghost. Not that the gift is limited. As we have said, it is given to every member of the Christian Church.

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\* 1 Cor. ii. 12.

† 1 Cor. ii. 14.

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The weakest and most insignificant is in no way behind in this respect. All may know, nay, the object of His Presence with us is that all shall know, and with such a Teacher all ought to know.

If now we ask why this personal experience of the living Christ is confined to a comparative few out of the large mass of Christians, it must be admitted that the chief reason is "want of faith in the Holy Ghost." In the first days, the evidences of the work of the Holy Spirit were so many and powerful that no Christian could fail to be reminded of Him. The strange scenes that were constantly witnessed in the early Christian assemblies, when speaker after speaker would be carried away in ecstasy to utter words hard to be understood, made all conscious of His Presence. And yet, even then, those who had never experienced those wonderful results of His working, those who never spake with tongues, began to doubt whether He was living and moving in them, just as many to-day who have never passed through any spiritual crisis, who have never been very powerfully moved, wonder whether the Pentecostal gift has ever been received by them. It was necessary for the Apostle to remind such that no one could come to the conviction that Jesus was the Lord except by the Holy Ghost,\* that that most elementary knowledge which stands at the foundation of the Christian life is only obtained through His power and working. In these days, when the manifestations of the Spirit's power are not so clear, when the gifts of tongues and miracles seem to be withdrawn, or changed in their expression, and His many other gifts are generally recognised as having only a human origin, it is not

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\* 1 Cor. xii. 3.

surprising that many fail to seek His aid, and suppose that by faith in Jesus Christ and the exercise of their own intelligence they may have all that they require. To such S. Paul's words, just quoted, should come as a needful reminder. Even the first stage in the knowledge of the Lord, that which conveys a recognition of His lordship, cannot be reached except by the help of the Holy Ghost.

Before concluding this chapter, it may be well to insist on one condition which would seem to be necessary to secure His help, without which all our desire to know is useless, and that is "stillness." "Be still, and know that I am God."\* We know how essential quiet is for all knowledge; how we like to get away by ourselves, free from noise and interruption, if we are eager to know some difficult matter. We know how it is not otherwise with the knowledge of persons ; how in seeking to know our friend better, we get alone with him, even resenting the intrusion of another as a barrier which will prevent the realization of our hopes. How, then, can we expect to know Jesus Christ, even with the help of the Holy Ghost, unless we are prepared to be alone? Why should we suppose that that knowledge which is the most difficult of all to attain is to be picked up, as it were, without effort as we go along the dusty path on our daily duties? The friend whose company we never sought, for whom we could never find time, would soon cease to be a friend ; and had it not been for the extraordinary patience of Jesus Christ, many would have lost His friendship long ago. We need, then, a time in every day when we can be still ; when, shutting out all sights and sounds, we may concentrate our minds on

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\* Ps. xlvi. 10.

Him Whom to know is everlasting life. The common objection to this suggestion is that which Martha virtually made when she complained to our Lord of her sister's selfishness in giving her all the work to do whilst she sat at His feet listening to His teaching. "This duty must be done, and I have no right to seek quiet until it is finished," is what we say. But our Lord refuses to recognize it. The good part is that which Mary chose, namely, fellowship with the Lord. That is the first thing, the all-important thing, coming even before attention to His wants, and He would not interfere with it. But what about the many things that claimed Martha's attention? What about the anxieties and worries of a small household, where much has to be done and there is but little to do it with? What about them? Important though they may seem to be, they are not of prime importance. Even if the preparations are marred for lack of time, even if the business is not so clearly laid out because the hour was reduced to half an hour, it is no great matter. What is essential in the host or hostess, what is essential in the business man, is a calm and quiet mind. The feast so carefully thought out and prepared, and the interview for which so much was brought in readiness, alike depend for their success on the spirit of those who arrange them. And that depends on the time given to fellowship with the Lord. To have come fresh from quiet communion with Him is to come with life which will make itself felt in all our intercourse with others. A large part of the time spent in business would be saved, and much of the dulness and formality of our entertaining would disappear, if men gave more time to quiet fellowship with Him Who knows our business better and loves our friends more wisely than we do.

## CHAPTER VI.

### KNOWLEDGE BY PRAYER.

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Filled with the knowledge of His will. —*Col. i. 9.*

WE have seen in previous chapters that not only are we made to know Christ, being made *in* Him; not only have we every help in the fellowship of the Holy Ghost for knowing Him; but that He seeks to know us. We ought, then, to know Him better than we know our best friend; and this He expects, for He tells us that unless we place Him first in our regard we cannot be classed even amongst His disciples, *i.e.*, His learners. How, then, is it that our knowledge is so superficial? We have already said that it is due in part to our want of faith in the Holy Ghost; it is due also to the fact that we make so little use of the means He has provided. It is of these that we intend to speak; and first of Prayer.

Directly we apprehend what the knowledge is that we are seeking to obtain, we see that prayer must be necessarily the chief means for obtaining it. For this knowledge implies personal communion. It is not like the knowledge of a great historical character, which necessitates chiefly intellectual ability, sympathetic insight and width of mind, and which depends for its

fulness on the number of facts that can be obtained and verified ; it is as open to the simple and ignorant as to the clever and wise, and grows through companionship. The life of this companionship in the spiritual world is what we call prayer, for prayer is the exercise of the soul in its endeavour to find and know God.

We have already noticed the objection that the knowledge of persons is hindered by absence, and have seen how it has been met. But we may say here, in addition to what we said there, that it is not difficult to imagine that if the correspondence of two friends who never saw one another were perfectly free and unconstrained, and unfettered by the limitations which hamper it, it might establish a friendship of a purer, higher character than that which is made by constant visits. The thought and care which correspondence demands, the desire to give pleasure and happiness which animates it, the opportunity it gives to the writer to say what he could not frame his tongue to repeat, are all in favour of a man giving his best to his friend in his letter, of giving a better best than he would in actual conversation. So, too, on the other side, the memory is so treacherous that we forget or are in hesitation as to what it was our friend actually said ; we wish that it had been written down. So we find that the letter not only gives us something of the same pleasure that our friend's presence would supply, but that we are able to enjoy it again and again, going over the very words and living upon them. It is not, therefore, impossible to imagine a true and noble friendship growing up between two who never saw one another, but whose friendship was built up upon correspondence. Nay, the multiplication of means of intercourse more spiritual

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than that which the post supplies—*e.g.*, the telephone and wireless telegraphy—suggests to the imagination the possibility that without even letters a friendship might be formed. All that is really necessary is that in some way I may communicate my mind to my friend, and may have in return his. Now this is what we understand by prayer. It is the means by which we reveal our mind to One Who, though invisible, is very near; the means by which we may know Christ and Christ may know us; for we must not forget that true knowledge is mutual, and that if we know not Christ, He knows not us.

Here we are at once met with a difficulty. All men pray more or less, and yet but comparatively few know Christ. It seems as though prayer failed in its purpose. But do we not know that correspondence, nay, interviews, may entirely fail us in obtaining knowledge of people? How many are of a purely business character, in which the personal element does not enter at all. The writers do not expect, nay, in many cases do not wish to know their correspondents. They desire some advantage or help, and are satisfied when they get it. And is not this the character of many prayers? There is no thought of communion or fellowship, but a sense of need or danger which God will supply or save us from. No knowledge is sought for or desired, and, it is needless to add, none is obtained. As to the character of Him to Whom we pray, we are no wiser after prayer than before.

The first thing necessary, then, is to look upon prayer as we look upon the letters we write to our friend, as being chiefly means of intercourse with Christ. But this means thought; for our letters to friends are not confined to our needs, nay, we are rather ashamed to

mention them, lest we should be supposed to be simply writing for selfish purposes. We feel that our friendship, or rather our sense of the value to us of our friend's friendship, is imperilled by many petitions. We like him to feel that we care for him for what he is, not for what he gives. It must not be otherwise in our prayers to our Lord. It is true that we are encouraged, and freely, to lay every need before His throne ; but that generous care for our circumstances must not be abused. There must be a proportion in our prayers. Praise and thanksgiving must hold their place with petition. We need, then, in the first place, to think carefully of what we are going to say. Even with a valued earthly friend we do not at once rush off a letter. We think of our correspondent, of what will interest him. It may be that we have heard how some one appreciated something he said or did, or how his counsel was needed in some difficulty, or of some gift that we have recently received ; and so, having the mind prepared, we write.

It is in this spirit of thoughtful care for Him to Whom we are about to speak that we should prepare for prayer. A wise leader in the devotional life has said that if we had but three minutes for prayer, two should be spent in realizing God's presence. That is a much needed caution ; but that realization should carry with it the further thought of what we desire to say. What are the subjects of which we shall speak ? Of what will He like to hear ? Some one may ask, Why should we suppose that He will be interested in hearing of that which is already known to Him ? We can tell Him nothing new, nothing that will give Him the pleasant shock of surprise. That is true ; but does a father feel no interest in his child's letter because he knows so well its subject ? It is not information that he looks for, but

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the affection which prompts the child to write, and the development of character which his letter reveals. So with us: we may be sure that "He is always more ready to hear than we to pray"; and that His delight lies partly in the love which leads us to pray, partly in the revelation of character the prayer itself displays. It is, then, our duty to bestow some thought on our prayers, to learn how to pray. We must not only think what our prayers are to us, but what they are to Him. We must try to picture the pleasure with which He sees us fall to prayer and the interest with which He listens to what we say.

Thought, then, is the first essential for prayer. A good model is the next. It is not difficult to imagine how, if we were suddenly told to write a letter to our king, we should welcome a little guidance and help. The very fact that we were called upon to address one occupying a very different station from our own would introduce a difficulty. It was this feeling with regard to prayer that led the disciples to ask to be taught to pray. Strictly speaking, lessons in the art of conversation would seem to make it formal and mechanical; and we feel that lessons in the art of prayer would have the same result. But, on the other hand, is it not true that we only come to freedom through rule and the discipline of learning? We learn even to talk, and we gain no freedom in music or drawing without the formalities involved in scales and perspective. It is not otherwise with prayer. We must learn both the method and language. And in this particular, Churchmen are well off. In the first place, we have the Lord's Prayer clearly set before us in the Prayer Book as the model of our public prayers, and therefore, by implication, our pattern for private prayer. Our early familiarity with it, and the

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excellent exposition of it given by the Catechism, ought to have taught us how to frame our prayers, what things we should put first and what last.

It is surely significant, in view of the way in which we are now looking at prayer, that the first petition concerns the Divine Name, *i.e.*, His character, that we should be taught to think of Him before we think of ourselves. It is the method that one friend would certainly adopt with another. Some expression of affection, some desire that his correspondent might be more widely known and appreciated would naturally find a first place. "Hallowed be Thy Name" is the language of intelligent and reverent devotion, but the devotion of a friend rather than that of a slave.

So, too, the end of the Prayer. How natural it is for us to conclude our letters with expressions of confidence, trust and affection, especially if we have had occasion to ask for some help. We wish our friend to feel that now that we have put the matter into his hands we have no further anxiety. We trust him entirely. Again the address of a friend, but not of a servant.

Further, the order of the direct petitions suggests the same feeling. In proportion as we care for our friend, we care for his interests rather than our own. The wife writing to her husband who is in London engaged in parliamentary work is chiefly interested in the success of his measures. Their results seem to be more important to her than to him, and she longs that they may win a large measure of support and speedily pass into law. To the gardener or butler they are of small moment, for they know too little about them ; they are servants, not friends. Here, again, the language, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," is suggestive of intelligent friendship. It is not different

with the two petitions which follow, which are confined to essential needs. The stranger, the servant, seek for something more than is absolutely necessary. "Bread" will not content them. They, too, are concerned with the future. They like to extort a promise of future help, that they may rest on some written guarantee when an emergency arises. The friend, on the other hand, barely mentions the subject of need, and then only that which is immediately pressing. So, too, the plea for forgiveness, on the ground that we are trying to catch and exhibit His own generous spirit, is just that which friendship would develop. From this bare outline, it is easy to see how much we may learn of the proper spirit of prayer in the Lord's Prayer. And as He taught us to pray like that to the Father, can we do better than use His own method in our prayers to Him?

But not only in the Lord's Prayer, but also in the Collects of the Prayer Book we have valuable models which, if carefully considered and imitated, must lead not only to an orderly framework of prayer, but also an expressive language. The Attributes which preface the Church's prayers, such as Almighty, Everlasting, Creator and Preserver of all mankind; the noble foundations on which faith builds up her expectation, as in the words, "The Author of peace and Lover of concord," when we are asking for peace; or the words, "Whom truly to know is everlasting life," when we are asking for knowledge; the aspiration to which the prayer leads, and the touching conclusion, "Through Jesus Christ," or "Through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ," all these supply helps in the framing of our prayers which we shall do well to make use of. But not slavishly. Whilst we learn the principles underlying the formation of prayers and the lofty language by which

they are characterized, we must not become mere imitators, but rather intelligent users of the examples supplied us. We must not only pray with the spirit, but with the understanding also, and the understanding is greatly helped by instruction. He, then, that would pray profitably, that would enter into communion with a living Lord, must catch the spirit and expression of those who themselves have known the Lord, and from a long experience in prayer know how they may best speak with Him.

Beside the prayers of the Prayer Book, we have much help in such books as Andrewes' "Private Devotions," Wilson's "Sacra Privata," and others. The Churchman, then, ought to be a better disciple in the matter of prayer than others, for he is continually being taught. Yet we must with sorrow confess that it is often the other way. We must suppose that some are content with the use of the words of others, without venturing to make them their own. Such a practice not only robs prayer of a large part of its interest and reality, but it effects nothing in the way of the knowledge of the Lord. Prayer, as we have seen, is mainly an opportunity of intercourse, of communion with our Lord, and the most valuable effect of the use of model prayers is that they gradually teach us to think in accord with His mind. Through His own words and the words of those who have lived close to Him, we learn how He looks at our earthly life, what things are important, what things stand in the second place, and we begin to grow into His mind. And so that view of prayer which sometimes unhappily is put forward as though it were the only one, I mean the subjective view, is of great importance. It may be quite true to say, with Mr. Robertson, in his sermon on Prayer, that "all prayer is

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to change the will human to the will Divine," provided we do not forget the objective side in prayer. It is, indeed, a process of spiritual education by which the man of earth climbs to the position of his true home, and learns to look at all things as a citizen of the Kingdom of God. Or, to use another metaphor, it is a lesson in the language of the Other Life, and through it we learn, as we do with a foreign tongue, not only the expression of those brought up differently from ourselves, but, what is more valuable, the ideas that underlie it. We learn to become at home in ways that are higher than our ways, in thoughts that are higher than our thoughts.

But a question here arises of great importance. Are we not taught by our Lord to pray to the Father rather than to Himself? And if all our devotions are concentrated upon the Father, then how will there grow up that reverent, intimate fellowship with Christ of which we are speaking? Nay, is it not true that that spiritual movement of devotion to the Father, which has had such blessed results in making clearer than ever before the meaning of that Holy Name, lost something of that warm and tender affection for Christ which was and is the strength of Evangelicalism? It is, of course, undeniable that our Lord usually points men to the Father. They are to ask the Father in His Name, and He will do what they ask, but it is that "the Father may be glorified in the Son."\* Yes, though the Father is to be the ultimate goal of their thoughts, it is quite clear that the Lord never expected that the intimate fellowship which they had enjoyed with Him was to cease. Nay, His illustrations of Communion,

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\* S. John xiv. 13.

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abiding, eating, drinking, clearly imply that it is to be fuller, not less full, than it was before. And this the Apostles expected. It was natural for S. Stephen to turn to his Lord in his last hour, natural for S. Paul always to look to Him in his needs and distresses.\*

It is true we look to the Father, but only "through Jesus Christ"; and that "*through*" is no mere empty formula, but implies an actual communion of thought and fellowship of mind. It is true we yearn to know the Father, but He is only known in Christ. If we are to make any distinction at all between prayer to the Father and prayer to the Son, we may follow our own Litany, the larger part of which is addressed directly to the Son, but the whole of which is commended, both at the beginning and the end, to the Father. Or we may go still further back, and take the "Te Deum" for our example. Here, as a recent writer† advocates with much probability, the whole of this Psalm of Praise, except three verses, is addressed to the Son, though the worship of the Father and the Spirit finds its place in the middle of the hymn. We cannot be wrong, then, in holding very full communion with our Lord in prayer and praise, whilst we shall naturally, when such spiritual communion has lifted us up to the Father, conclude our devotions with the Lord's Prayer and such other prayers as are immediately addressed to Him. Any possible risk that such a practice may expose us to would be always provided against by our public services. They, linked as they are to the Holy Eucharist, which is necessarily addressed to the Father in the Spirit, will

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\* Acts vii. 59-60; 1 Cor. i. 2-3; 2 Cor. xii. 8; 1 Thess. iii. 11-12.

† Jackson: *The Prayer Book Explained*, chapter viii.

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preserve that due proportion which is the safeguard of all true devotion.\*

Enough has now been said to shew that our knowledge of the Lord very largely depends on prayer, prayer independently of any replies which it may obtain. And we have seen, further, that it must be prefaced and sustained by earnest thought, just that thought we should give in writing to a dear friend who occupied a position very much above us. It is needless to say that this means effort, and very earnest effort. That is part of the cost which we must pay for the knowledge of the Lord. We do not hesitate to give it, and give it freely, to our earthly friends, for whom we undertake strange tasks, learning languages and difficult arts; shall we then doubt about bestowing it generously on the Son of God? Let any one compare what he does for his friend in letter-writing alone with what he does for the Lord, and then let him cease wondering why his friend is more to him than Christ. "No one is likely to do much at prayer," wrote Bishop Hamilton, in words often quoted, "who does not look upon it as a work to be prepared for and entered upon with all the serious earnestness which a difficult task demands." We might use the very same words about friendship. No friend was ever won or could be won by the unintelligent scraps of intercourse with which we are accustomed to seek our Lord. The fragment of the morning united to the fragment of the evening, how poor a whole they must make. But we are fettered by other difficulties than those of want of thought and care; and of these,

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\* For clear and helpful teaching on Prayer to Distinct Persons in the Eternal Godhead, see Worledge: *Prayer*, pp. 93-97; and Liddon: *The Divinity of our Lord*, pp. 387-422 (4th edition).

the habit that clings to us that we can only pray when kneeling is not unimportant. Many would probably spend a much longer time in communion with our Lord than they do if they could bring themselves to believe that standing, walking, sitting, and even lying down may be attitudes of prayer. All are brought under the Apostle's injunction that we should pray without ceasing, and all but the last are recognised in our own public service. It is much to be wished that the same variety of posture should be employed in private as in public, that so we might not only learn to make the half-hour or hour spent with Him as restful as possible, but to associate every attitude that we adopt with Him.

The words of the Bishop of Durham, giving his own experience, are most apt and to the point. "As regards *utterance*, I rarely allow myself to pray quite silently in secret. For myself, I find the wanderings of the mind very much limited and controlled by even the faintest audible utterance of thought. And as regards *attitude*, I very seldom venture to kneel at prayer in secret. At night it leads almost invariably, and very speedily, to sleeping on my knees, and even in the morning hour, I know not how, recollectiveness and concentration of heart and mind are usually quickened in my case by a reverent standing attitude as before the visible Master and Lord, or by walking up and down, either in-doors or, as I love to do when possible, in the open air. A garden may prove a very truly hallowed oratory."\*

The Book of Psalms, the Prayer Book, the private devotions of saintly men, when taken up with thought and care, will, then, provide a way for the knowledge of

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\* *All in Christ*, pp. 82-83 (Marshall Brothers).

the Lord which will grow easier and more delightful as the years roll on, and we shall find the exercise of prayer not what it so often is, a time of constraint, but a time of refreshing, uplifting, and strengthening the mind and spirit, as well as winning countless blessings for ourselves.

## CHAPTER VII.

### KNOWLEDGE BY PRAYER.

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He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him.—*S. John* xiv. 21.

WE have already seen how we may come to know Christ by the use of prayer; how prayer, in its reflex action, tends to make us like Christ, and, therefore, to know Him better. But no one can be satisfied with this. A knowledge of a person that was obtained through thinking over or using the real or imaginary correspondence of others with him would not lead us far. We need something more than that. We need the assurance that the person we seek to know not only thinks of us, but cares to shew that he does. In the knowledge of the Lord we need the confidence that He not only knows, but reveals Himself to us. And some words of His which we have noted before contain the promise that He will do this.\* “He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him.” Nothing could be more plain and simple than this declaration. Personal manifestation is assured to all on the one condition that we love Him.

And this is no vague subjective manifestation, the

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\* *S. John* xiv. 21.

product of our own imagination. As Bishop Westcott, in his Commentary on the Gospel of S. John, explains to us, the Greek word translated "manifest" implies "a presentation in a clear, conspicuous form." It is the word used of the manifestation of those who rose out of their graves after the Crucifixion and appeared to their friends ; of our Lord Himself during the great forty days. It is clearly objective. The Apostles expected that, and nothing short of it would have satisfied them. S. Jude, who was standing by and heard the promise, expressed surprise, not at that, but that it should be private and not public. He, in common with the other disciples, had looked for a great, open, triumphant manifestation of the Messiah before the whole world, and he regarded this substitution of the private individual revelation of Christ as a change of plan. "What has come to pass," he asks in astonishment, "that Thou wilt manifest Thyself to us and not to the world?"\* And in reply, our Lord explains that, though objective and real, as we should say, yet such manifestation is only discoverable to those who love Him and keep His words. "If a man love Me, he will keep My words : and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him." Here, again, the words emphasize the objective reality of the vision. To quote Bishop Westcott once more : "The idea is the recognition of the Divine without (so to speak), and not of the consciousness of the Divine within. The Christian sees God by him . . . and does not only feel Him in him."

From this brief examination we see two things clearly :—

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\* S. John xiv. 22.

(1) That the manifestation will, though objective, be of a character not discoverable by the world. It will not, then, be in outward form, and in this respect will differ from what we ordinarily understand by the word "manifestation."

(2) It will only be made to those who love Christ and keep His words.

It may be objected that to say that the manifestation will be in a clear, conspicuous form, and yet not outward for all to see, is to make an admission and then to take it away. For what idea can we frame of a personal manifestation irrespective of outward form? In reply, we say: Does not a letter, in proportion as it is genuine and true, give us a revelation of the character we are seeking to know? May we not see as much, nay, even more, through a letter than through a personal interview? Philemon probably knew more of the heart and mind of S. Paul through his letter about Onesimus than he had ever known before. And even letters are not the only means of self-revelation. The action of others may reveal our friends to us. Let us imagine that A writes in great distress to his friend B for a loan of £5, and that B, feeling that the gift of the money may sap A's independence, gets a friend of his to offer him a piece of work which will bring in that sum. B meanwhile writes regretting that he is unable to give him the particular help he asks for, and secretly sets in motion the other means of assistance, which he thinks will be more effective. A, on receiving B's answer, may take B's regret to lend the money as it appears, or he may, so to speak, read between the lines, and in the very terms of the refusal see a determination to help him. When, then, the work is offered which will give him the assistance he needs, he sees his friend's hand in

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it, and on inquiry finds that it is as he believed. Now, he has not seen his friend, nor has he heard from him in the way he once expected, and yet his friend has been really manifested to him by his action. He knows how easy it would have been for him to have sent him the cheque, how much more trouble this other way of helping him involved, and how much more personal consideration this really shows. He sees his friend as he never saw him before.

Now, it is not unlikely that Christ's answers to our prayers may be of this character. There will not be outward visions such as men have at all times longed for, forgetting that we live in the dispensation of the Spirit, and not of the Flesh ; nor will there be anything answering to the outward form of letters but there will be some change in our circumstances which the Holy Spirit, Who witnesses to Christ, will teach us is a revelation of the Christ.

It will not be easy to see ; nay, it will only be seen by those who love Christ and keep His word. To the world, the revelation is a piece of good fortune, a strange coincidence, a stroke of good luck and the like ; it does not see His hand, and smiles at the believer who persists in saying that in it he can discern the Christ. It is not uninterested in answers to prayer, but fails to see what relation these answers bear to the prayers ; for they do not appear to be at all obvious. The expected relief does not come in the way that was asked for, nor at the time when it was asked. Weeks, perhaps months, have elapsed since the difficulty was mentioned, and, now it is removed, the world considers it superstitious to connect its removal with the prayer. Now, Christians are often troubled to know what to say in reply to these thoughts which sometimes fill their minds ; and they ask them-

selves whether, after all, they are not trying to find what is not there. Perhaps the best reply is that which a close study of the Gospels gives us. They tell us of many prayers to Christ and of many answers. But when we look into them, we find very much what we discover in our own experience, that there are delays, answers unlike the petitions, and generally such disturbing elements as we should not have expected. As a matter of fact, many of our Lord's answers to prayers are very like His answers to the questions that were from time to time put to Him. And with regard to these, Dr. Hort draws attention to what we must have often noticed, and that is, "that few, if any, of the questions addressed to our Lord received an answer in the shape that was desired." He then explains why his was so : "It is not enough to say that His merciful wisdom withheld such replies as might have proved injurious to the moral state of the questioners. The replies which He gave were not merely more profitable, but more true, and more apposite in their truth than any others could have been. . . . His constant aim is less to give present satisfaction than to seize on the present demand as an opportunity for initiation into a future and progressive satisfaction to be vouchsafed to ripening powers and expanding knowledge."\*

This principle applies to the answers He makes to prayers. His aim there is "less to give present satisfaction" than to make the demand an opportunity for a further knowledge of Himself. So, whilst He might always, as He did sometimes, have healed by a word, He preferred that the petitioner should be brought into close personal relation to Himself by a touch, or some

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\* Hort : *The Way, The Truth, The Life*, p. 4.

outward sign, which must have sent a thrill of feeling through and through the sufferer.

It is true that He sometimes granted the request at once, as in the case of the leper, but even then demanded silence, that the mind of him who was healed might not dissipate the blessing by idle chatter, but rather use the gift with a view to a nearer relationship with Himself. The request was not, however, always so granted. The nobleman who begged for his son's life was met with the apparently stern rejoinder, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe,"\* and bidden to depart from the good Physician without a single sign such as he had looked for, and only the bare promise, "Thy son liveth." So, too, the ten lepers who besought the Lord so earnestly for healing naturally expected that they would be healed there and then, but were told to depart on a long journey to Jerusalem, in the faith that when they reached it they would be well.† So, too, the sick of the palsy looked for healing of the body, but the first words he heard were, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee."‡ And sometimes the object sought for could not be given until the petitioner's attitude of mind was changed. It was so, we may well believe, in the case of the Syro-Phoenician woman.§ She approached our Lord with words which, to her, must have been quite unreal. Though living on the borders of Israel, and in close contact with the Jews, she had apparently manifested no wish to adopt their religion. She remained an outsider, degraded by the abominable superstitions and practices of the Canaanites. And yet, heathen as she was, she addressed our Lord as the Son of David. Was it that

\* S. John iv. 48.

‡ S. Mark ii. 5.

† S. Luke xvii. 14.

§ S. Matt. xv. 22-28.

she hoped in this way to disguise the fact of her heathen connections, and to appear as a member of the covenanted people? If so, there could be no answer until her prayer was stripped of its sham; and there was none: "He answered her not a word." She then dropped the title, and simply cried, "Lord, help me." But she had still to be taught, as the woman of Samaria had, the honour that belonged to the Jews, the people of the Covenant; she had still to learn that they stood in a special relation to the Father; and it was only when she accepted the lowly position of one outside the Covenant that she gained the blessing she so earnestly sought. It was the same dislike to unreality that led our Lord to meet the rich young man's question, "What good thing shall I do to inherit eternal life?" with the words, "Why callest thou Me good?" It is essential to prayer that every word be true and sincere. In other cases the blessing had to be delayed, though the delay might cause much suffering, because some great truth which it was of high importance to learn could not be learned in any other way. This was so with the urgent prayer of Martha and Mary that the Lord would come and heal their brother, Lazarus, who was dangerously ill. The Lord answered the prayer by staying where He was and allowing Lazarus to die.\* The pain of those five days before the sisters saw our Lord must have been very severe, and yet He could not relieve it without sacrificing something of that great truth of the Resurrection which it was so important for them and for us to learn.

Now, from these few examples, and they might easily be multiplied, we learn what is the real pur-

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\* S. John xi. 6.

pose of prayer. This is clearly not so much the satisfaction of a need as the revelation of a Person. Our Lord's aim was always to make the need a new link with Himself. He wished in every case to manifest Himself, and the crying want gave the opportunity. Prayer is, then, intended to be a very important means of knowledge ; but it can only be this if we make certain rules about it. And the first must be absolute sincerity. We ask, and we have not, because we ask amiss.\* Like the Syro-Phœnician woman, we use high, exalted titles without understanding or believing all that they imply. We start with an air of unreality. We address God as King of kings and Lord of lords, and yet our listless behaviour seems to shew that we have but a faint realization of Him as such. We speak to Him as "our Father," and may almost hear Him asking, "Why callest thou Me Father?" Our prayers, like our conversation, run on too fast, quicker than our thoughts. Insensibly we adopt the view that we shall be heard for our "much speaking." We should be ashamed to spend the time we give in the morning to but one prayer, slowly and carefully thought over; and yet five words spoken with deep meaning are better than a thousand which only convey a general idea. It is true, as Du Maurier reminds us, "Thinking's praying, very often"; but it is still more true that praying is thinking, and cannot be divorced from thought.

And this leads us to the second rule of prayer, and that, the serious consideration of what we are going to ask for. Many, no doubt, are accustomed to use the same prayers day by day, having done so from childhood ; and there are, no doubt, many prayers of a

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\* S. James iv. 3.

general character which are most suitable for repeated use, but even with these we should pause to ask ourselves, from time to time, whether we are conscious that they are being answered ; whether, for example, we have connected the humiliation that we experienced in society or business with the petition against vanity and pride which we have used for years ; or whether we recognized that the long, tiresome wait at the railway station or in the train was connected with the desire that we had expressed every day for patience. Or it may be that we asked to be free from the deceits of the world, and then repined because we were not asked to some entertainment which would have certainly carried us off our feet. In proportion as we are real in our prayers, so will our lives be shaped. We often like the prayers better than their appropriate answers. We sing with fervour, "Nearer, my God, to Thee," not realizing, any more than the mother of Zebedee's children, that we are asking for tribulation and suffering, laying ourselves open to the question : "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?"\* "Our God is a consuming fire,"† and to be near Him is to feel the flames. It is better to be sparing in our words than, in our desire to imitate the language of saints and martyrs, to ask for what we should be frightened to receive.

But the real interest of prayer lies less in its general features, the same to-day as they were ten years ago, than in those special characteristics which the daily life gives it. The thoughtful man looks over his day's engagements, his day's work, his day's recreation before

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\* S. Matt. xx. 22.

† Heb. xii. 29.

he speaks. He considers the special difficulties or blessings with which it has begun, which form, as it were, the day's atmosphere. It may be there is illness in the house, or he must face his work feeling quite unequal to it. It may be that a great joy has been given him, or that he feels peculiarly fit. The prayers will take their colour from his temperament, and he looks with shrinking or with fearless confidence to their demands. He asks simply and directly, taking each stage in his work in order. He considers the people he is likely to see, and, knowing how easily meetings and interviews are spoiled, prays with a view to them. Like the Psalmist, he sets his prayer in order,\* bringing his work and pleasure, faggot by faggot, for the Divine sacrifice. Having done so, like him, he mounts his tower and "watches" for the manifestations of the Lord which he is sure will follow.

And here we come to the third rule in prayer : Watching, or seeking. This is really *the* most important principle of the three. It will be remembered how our Lord joins the two together : "Ask and ye shall have ; seek and ye shall find." Many obey the first without considering the second. It is this second that invites our own co-operation. No sooner is the prayer spoken than the answer is given. It is our duty to find it. If it should be urged that we are really making our small concerns of absurd importance by supposing that they can be subjects of God's care, then, with Ruskin, we reply that "we treat God with irreverence by banishing Him from our own thoughts, *not* by referring to His will on slight occasions. His is not the finite authority or intelligence which cannot be troubled with small

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\* Ps. v. 3, R. V.

things. There is nothing so small but that we can honour God by asking His guidance of it or insult Him by taking it into our own hands." But we must seek.

And in seeking, taught by the many examples we have of our Lord's methods in replying to suppliants, we learn that, in the first place, we must be patient ; that we are not to give up looking because the blessing is not found on the day when it was asked for. Secondly, that we may be asking in the wrong way, and that, before we can find what we need, the form of our prayer must be changed. Thirdly, that the blessing may be wrapped up in some duty which has to be done, but which we have forgotten ; and, lastly, that it will come in some way which will bring us into closer fellowship with our Lord and enable us to know Him better. And so we patiently look out. And in the evening we look back on the matters that gave us disquiet as we faced them in prayer, and ask ourselves how we have fared. And what is our experience ? Do we not find that the good hand of the Lord has been plainly with us ? The work we feared as dull and tiresome brought unexpected interest ; the weakness we felt as we awaked, passed away ; the meeting was long and trying, but an unexpected turn brought us nearer to the goal than we had been before ; the recreation was disappointing, but we seemed to be lifted up above it, and found enjoyment where we had not expected it. We may not feel that we made any great success, but we do feel that He has been with us, using us and teaching us. We could not expect to find any help that would spoil those virtues of poverty of spirit, penitence, meekness, purity, on which He lays such stress and to which He attaches such great blessings, but we did look for the peace of God which passeth

all understanding, and that we feel we have enjoyed. He has never promised to spare us pain and tribulation ; nay, He has expressly told us that in the world we shall have tribulation, that unless we suffer with Him we cannot expect to reign with Him. But half the pain of pain is gone when we see its purpose; and this seems to have been gradually explained to us; and, though we feared as we entered the cloud, we were cheered by the thought of the vision that we knew would follow.

Thus each day brings its own manifestations, its own confirmations of the truth of the Lord's promise, "If any man love Me, and keep My words, I will manifest Myself to him." And, as the years pass, they become clearer and clearer. As Dr. Dale writes in a touching sermon, "Love for Christ": "The proofs are of a kind that exclude the possibility of doubt ; the most impressive and the most touching are probably those which belong to regions of life known only to Christ and themselves. Difficulties have been solved for them in ways which to themselves were unquestionably Divine ; they were as sure that the light which came to them shone from Christ as they are that the brightness which breaks through the clouds comes from the sun. Or they asked Christ to expel from them some evil spirit of temper which shamed them, which made them despise and hate themselves, but which they could only check and could not drive out ; and, in answer to prayer, Christ expelled it. Or they asked for other forms of spiritual blessing—every one must tell the story for himself—and what they asked for was given. And just as a man might sit down over a packet of letters which he had received at intervals during many years from his father or mother—letters written to congratulate him on hearing of his honours and successes, or to express sympathy

with him on hearing of his troubles, or to give advice in answer to a statement of his perplexities—and as he turned them over and recalled the circumstances in which they were written, might come to realize more vividly than he had ever realized before the warmth, the intensity, the endurance of his father's or his mother's love for him, so the remembrance of the special proofs that Christ has heard and answered our prayers produces sometimes what may be described as a revolution in our thoughts about Him. The reality of His personal affection is suddenly brought home to us, and there are relations—shall I call them relations of mutual confidence?—established between Him and us the blessedness of which transcends all our hopes."

So we grow in the personal knowledge of the Lord, every day adding something to it, a knowledge of another kind to that which the Bible gives us; for there we are told what He is to others, but here what He is to us; there of His plans for the world, here of His plans for us.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### KNOWLEDGE IN WORK.

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His servants shall do Him service, and they shall see His face.—  
*Rev. xxii. 4.*

WE have seen how we grow into the knowledge of Christ by prayer. By making it a study, a subject to be learned like a language or an art, we insensibly grow into His mind, have “the mind of Christ”; by watching its effects, we unconsciously learn His principles of action.\* It is true that we only know in part; that we only see a reflection of Christ, as it were, as in a glass; we are not as yet face to face; but such knowledge is quite sufficient for life, more than enough to make us feel sure that we not only have real relations with a living Christ, but that the living Christ cares for us. We are able to say with S. Paul, “I know Whom I have believed.”†

Have we now exhausted our means of knowledge? Is fellowship in thought the only basis of friendship? Surely not. We not only learn to know our friend by conversation and correspondence, but still more by work. It is when we receive a note from him, asking us to come up and help him in his day’s

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\* 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

† 2 Tim. i. 12.

duties, that we feel not only honoured by the request, but delighted with the prospect of getting that further insight into his character which a share in his work will certainly give. Perhaps the invitation is to be his secretary, and we shall then see how he bears himself in relation with others ; or his messenger, when his mind will be laid open to us in the secrets he confides ; or it may be he proposes to give us a piece of work to ourselves, and we shall have the happiness of discovering how it ought to be done.

It is not otherwise with our Lord. His revelations are not reserved for those smaller and more definite acts of communion with Him which we call prayer. The larger parts of life are illuminated by His Presence. When we begin to realize that all our work is work for Him ; that the work in the study, the office and the shop may be His as truly as the ministry in the Church or the mission room, then we shall learn to expect such visits of encouragement and guidance as some great employer of labour now and again pays to his work-people. At first, indeed, it seems as though such could never be so vivid or illuminating as the tokens of His Presence granted in prayer, but we soon learn that this is not so, and that even the spiritual help which is given in prayer is intended to be used in work ; is given, indeed, that the work may be the better done.

It may be that as we have prayed we have experienced something like that which a friend of the Bishop of Durham describes in such glowing terms : "While heart and mind were kept in perfect peace, and not the slightest enthusiastic disturbance of judgment was to be suspected, it was yet as if a heaven had opened around me, and the joy of the Lord flowed in divine effusion over my being. The glory and beauty

of my Saviour's Person, the indescribable reality of His Presence both in me and around me, the absolute 'all sufficiency' of His grace and power, the loveliness and attraction of His 'perfect will,' all shone upon me with a brightness of which the August sunshine seemed but a type and shadow."\* It may be that we have known something like that, and, whilst the sense of it was strong upon us, there came a sudden summons to go off to some dull, prosaic duty, some work that we could not well postpone : the help to a child in his lessons ; the direction of a servant; the interview with some visitor. It seems almost profane to disturb that Presence which is now so near us. But to us, as to the monk in the Legend, come the words :

Do thy duty ; that is best—  
Leave unto the Lord the rest :

and as we go forth in obedience, his experience is ours. As the brightness of the Lord's Presence illuminated not only the cell, but the whole convent,

Like a luminous cloud, expanding  
Over floor, and wall, and ceiling,

so not only the path we take to our work, but the work itself is glorified by His manifestation. As the Bishop's friend expresses it : "In a sense the glory passed away, as to special excitation. But in a sense, in a yet deeper sense, it abode, diffused among the experiences of life, and proving 'its sober certainty of waking bliss' by its power amidst these experiences to calm and purify and lift above the selfishness of the old life."

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\* Moule : *Veni Creator*, p. 135.

But not only shall we take into our work the sense of that fellowship which has been our joy in prayer, for

Hadst thou stayed, I must have fled,

but we shall find in it, from time to time, what we may best describe as "surprise visits," *i.e.*, special manifestations of His Presence such as He has again and again granted to His friends.

It was whilst Moses was watching his father-in-law's sheep, that God was revealed to him. It was when Joshua was inspecting the walls of Jericho, and wondering how a difficulty apparently greater than that which Jordan presented to him was to be overcome, that he saw the Lord standing in his path. It was whilst Gideon was threshing his wheat that he saw the mysterious angel of the Lord watching his work. It was whilst Manoah's wife was sitting in the field, doubtless engaged in some household occupation, that she saw Him Whose countenance she described as being like that of an angel of God. It was whilst Saul was seeking his father's asses that his future was first revealed to him. It was whilst Levi was at his business at the receipt of custom that the Lord appeared to him with the summons, "Follow Me." It was whilst the disciples, S. James, S. John and S. Peter, were busy washing their nets that they received that revelation of the Lord which led them to forsake all and follow Him. It was when the women were returning from the sepulchre, whither they had gone to anoint the Lord's body, that He met them. It was after a fruitless night's fishing that the risen Lord shewed Himself to the five disciples on the sea of Galilee.

Instances such as these might be multiplied not only from the Scriptures, but from the experience of those

who have had faith to look for them. Indeed, in the early days of Christianity, so natural was this expectation of the Lord's Presence, and so often was it realized, that Tertullian was led to say, "Perhaps the majority of men learn to know God from visions." S. Theresa's account of the Lord's revelation to her can only be thought to be fanciful by those who suppose that there is no revelation except through the senses. "I was once with a person," she says—"it was at the very beginning of my acquaintance with her—when our Lord was pleased to shew me that these friendships were not good for me. Christ stood before me stern and grave, giving me to understand what in my conduct was offensive to Him. I saw Him with the eyes of my soul more distinctly than I could have done with the eyes of my body. The vision made so deep an impression on me that, though it is more than twenty-six years ago, I seem to see Him present now."\* Handel's account of the manifestation of the Divine Presence when he was at work on the "Hallelujah Chorus"—"I did think I did see all heaven before me and the great God Himself"—is not strange to many an artist, many a writer, who in some picture or poem afterward famous, has felt his heart burn within him, the sure sign of His Presence Whose "delight it is to be with the sons of men" whilst engaged in labour.

It would be interesting indeed to make a collection of such experiences, if they were not too sacred for the public eye. To the world they would mean nothing; but to the man who believes in an ever living, ever active Christ, Who is never so busy with the affairs of a universe that He forgets the plaintive cry of some

\* Lewis : *Life of S. Theresa*, cap. vii. 11.

Ishmael, or the strong appeal of some Apostle, they would be full of suggestion if nothing more. They would give point to words which awakened considerable interest when they were discovered but a short time ago, words which some still believe to have been spoken by the Lord. I allude to the words: "Lift the stone and *there* thou shalt find Me. Cleave the wood and I am there."\* Of the many interpretations, that which refers them to the revelation of our Lord amidst humble duties seems to be most satisfactory. Neither the lifting of stones nor the cutting of wood is work of a specially interesting and lofty character, and yet all are at times engaged in such pursuits. The removal of a stumbling block from the path of some weak and careless brother ; or of some difficulty in the way of a puzzled child ; or the simpler tasks fulfilled by every teacher in making learning easier and pleasanter, these may be means by which the Lord will be found. The cutting of wood, whether it be the preparation of material for a friend's task, or for some social duty ; or whether it be such a humble task as that of which the great Apostle was not ashamed, gathering sticks to light a fire, may be, as the latter indeed proved itself to be, an opportunity for the revelation of the Lord. It is in "lifting the stone" we see Him, in "cleaving the wood" that His Presence is manifested. So we find from the witness of the Scriptures and Christian biographies, and from a comparison of the revelations made to those at work with those made to such as were engaged in prayer or worship, that we are more likely to meet the Lord whilst pursuing our daily duty than whilst occupied

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\* For this thought I am much indebted to a sermon by the Rev. A. Plummer, D.D., Master of University College, Durham.

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in private devotion. The work may, indeed, seem to be poor and dull by comparison, but the character of the work matters nothing provided it be "in the Lord."

Enough has, perhaps, now been said to emphasize the fact that work as well as prayer offers a natural means for knowing the Lord. But it is not difficult to imagine some one saying : " All the examples you have given so far are evidently of a very exceptional character. What they were, how they were seen or apprehended, it is most difficult to say; but one thing is clear, they have but a small place, if any, in the ordinary Christian life. We are quite ready to admit that the susceptibility to spiritual impressions of that kind is in these days very small, and that we see no reason why, if our faith and spiritual sight were more largely developed, we should not see sights to which at present we are blind ; but we must look at things as they are, and, taking the Christian life as it is to-day, we must deny any outward manifestation of Christ's interest in our ordinary life and work unless there are other signs than those you have spoken of."

In answer, let us say at once that we have not cited these experiences with any other object than to shew that Christ has in the past *directly* revealed Himself to His workers whilst engaged in some duty. That what He has done He will continue to do is contained in the words, "*Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.*"\* But the manner of His doing this will not only vary from age to age, but with the individual ; for, here again, we must remind ourselves that the main purpose of His revelation is that we

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\* Heb. xiii. 8.

should know Him. Now, an outward form would, we venture to think, be the least effective in reaching our spiritual consciousness. Naturally we should be so taken up with the external aspect as to be in danger of losing the spiritual message it was intended to convey. And so we may believe that not only in our own time, but in the apostolic age, that form of revelation was uncommon. From time to time there were, no doubt, startling revelations needed by some particular occasion, or to emphasize the truth that Christ was alive and was with His disciples in all the work they undertook, but these were clearly exceptional; and, for the most part, Christian disciples and saints have gone on with their work steadily and obediently without any open manifestation such as S. Paul occasionally experienced in his life. But though without these particular and peculiar manifestations of His Presence, they have had others, perhaps, of more value to them for the purpose they were designed to serve. Professor Robertson Smith tells us that "the Hebrews were aware that the vision in which spiritual truth is clothed in forms derived from the sphere of the outer sense is not the highest form of revelation."\* S. Paul, too, evidently felt that such open manifestations were not without spiritual danger, for he tells us that lest he should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to him a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet him, lest he should be exalted above measure.† Again, our Lord reminds S. Thomas that a special blessing belongs to those who have not seen and yet have believed. We may, then, expect that as in prayer so in

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\* *Prophets of Israel* (1895 ed.), p. 220.

† 2 Cor. xii. 7.

work, the revelations of the Lord may be made known by such signs as only the intelligent faithful may discern.

Bishop Westcott, in his Studies on the Risen Life of our Lord, shews that even to the last the disciples “knew the Lord only through the interpretation they put upon their experience. . . . Without patient obedience, without cheerful labour, without living insight, those to whom the Lord came would not have known Him. He would have been to them only as one mere chance wayfarer who had crossed their path. This is the uniform law. ‘The world beholdeth Me no more, but ye behold Me’\* is the final promise to the faithful. . . . It was in vain that His brethren, in a moment of unbelief, bade Him manifest Himself to the world.† From the world, which has not the will to obey or the eyes to see the true Christ, the true Christ, the risen Christ, must be always hidden.” But, on the other hand, the eye of faith sees Him, and “He is recognized not by His person, but by His working. The gift of success and the gift of refreshment are seen to belong to Him and to make Him known.”‡ The gift of success ! How often we are tempted to take it as the natural outcome of the work. We have laboured for it, taken every pains to secure it, and, therefore, it is natural that we should have it. It is our own doing, and the congratulations of our friends assume that it is. Or even if we do recognize that it is from the hand of Christ ; if, like S. John on the sea of Galilee, we say when we see a result far beyond our expectation, “It is the Lord”; yet, even then, we are not disposed to pursue the matter further and to see what special revelation it

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\* S. John xiv. 19.

† S. John vii. 4.

‡ Westcott : *Revelation of the Risen Lord*, p. 118.

carries with it, what further knowledge of Him we reach by it. It may be to us something very like a miracle, but it is not a sign of what He is doing. And yet it is as a sign that it is given to us: a sign either of approbation of the methods we have adopted, or of encouragement that we may go further, or of teaching that as by a parable we may learn its spiritual counterpart. And as we dwell on it, ponder it, and consider its relation to ourselves, our families, or the Church, we learn what is meant by it, and through it gain a new knowledge of the Lord.

It is not otherwise when the work brings refreshment or failure. In the one case, we have a sense of the Lord working with us and imparting to us the joy that sustained Him in all that He did, and we feel that it is His law and appointment that work should bring life. In the other case, we learn that failure is no necessary mark of disapproval; that whilst it rightly leads to revision and careful consideration of principles and methods, it also reminds us that He Whose work was perfect failed, failed in Capernaum, Chorazin and Bethsaida. And so, taught by the Spirit of God, all our work becomes a canvas on which is worked in fuller and fuller measure the face of Christ: and we begin to understand something of what Bishop Lightfoot looked forward to when, on entering upon his work in Durham, he bade the large congregation that had assembled in the cathedral for his enthronement to pray "that glimpses of the invisible Righteousness, of the invisible Glory might be vouchsafed to him; and that the Eternal Presence, haunting him night and day, might rebuke, deter, guide, strengthen, comfort, illumine, consecrate and subdue the feeble and wayward impulses of his own heart to God's holy will and purpose."

## CHAPTER IX.

### KNOWLEDGE IN SUFFERING.

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That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings.—*Phil.* iii. 10.

WE have now considered two spheres for Christ's manifestation: (1) The life of prayer, the inner contemplative life; (2) the life of work, the outer active life. These do not, however, sum up all the experiences of life. There is a dark background, sometimes so illumined by the light of Christ's Presence that life looks glorified, even as some black cloud on a summer's day, when lighted up by the sun, adds beauty to the landscape, sometimes forgotten in the joys and pleasures of the foreground. This, which stands behind all life, at times overshadowing it completely, is what we call pain, suffering. It may not be pain of body nor distress of mind; it may be only the pain of weakness, the pain begotten by a feeling that we are of no use, can benefit no one, and are cumberers of the ground. But whatever its character, we can but rarely feel entirely free from its influence. And it has this importance, that it forms character, influences life more than thought, more than work.

And yet, though there is a general recognition that suffering of some kind is the normal accompaniment of life, though we try to comfort our friends in their trouble

by telling them there is nothing unusual in the difficulties or sorrows they are called upon to face, yet the chief bitterness of pain often consists in the feeling that we are alone, are being singularly dealt with. The man who is struggling with poverty or narrowness of means looks out on those whom he knows, and, judging from what he sees, fancies that no one is so hardly placed as he is. The invalid sees the strong and healthy pass in and out of his room, watches from his window the passers by, and wonders why God should afflict him alone. The desolate, sitting in widowed loneliness, and only learning through letter or newspaper of the lives of others which seem marked by good fortune, cannot understand why he should be singled out to pass the rest of his years in solitude. The disappointed, who have to face the lost chance which looked as though it would have secured all they wanted, feel that fortune smiles on all but themselves. The exile, longing to be home again, to see the green fields and hedges of his native land and enjoy familiar scenes, imagines that all who feel as he does have the opportunity to return, all but he. The married envy the single, who are spared household anxieties and family sickness ; the single envy the married, who are constantly welcomed by the brightness and love of home. The rich man envies the simple happy life of his cottager, who has no social worries ; the cottager, the wealth of his landlord, who has always a balance at the bank. The weary and anxious long for the strength of the man who always seems fit for his work ; and the strong man longs for the intellectual quickness, the emotional temperament of the weaker, which makes him such a pleasant companion. The soul knows its own bitterness, and imagines that there is nothing elsewhere quite like it.

It is only as we grow in experience of life that we recognize that the experience of God's people, as recorded in the Bible, whether it be that of the nation in the difficult and trying experiences of the wilderness, or of individuals like Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, David, is one of constant trial and difficulty; that "man is born to trouble." The New Testament, which reads as though it were written for pilgrims and sufferers, is found to be more universal in its application than we thought. We understand that the Cross is found in many other places than churches, and that the "crucifixion of the old man" is not such an isolated experience as we might expect.

At first, the discovery is very unwelcome. Bethlehem, Gethsemane, and Calvary are beautiful as historical scenes, but we shudder as we see them expressed again in courts and alleys, in castles and beautiful homes. We wonder how it is that the world is not better managed. Our own difficulties are trying enough, but they are small compared with those of "the submerged tenth," to say nothing of the millions of degraded heathen. To admit that half the world does not feel them as we should is not much alleviation, for the indifference to the ugly features of life is of itself a fresh difficulty. We grow impatient with the sights our hospitals, streets and lanes disclose. We would fain shut them out, and bar our doors against every entrance. "Subscribe! Yes, we'll subscribe; but, for God's sake, don't tell us anything about them. Let us be occupied with the good, the beautiful and the true, and shut both eyes and ears to anything that would disturb the peace and joy that spring from their contemplation."

This feeling is only for a moment. Directly we think of Him Who holds the solution of pain and trial in His

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hand, we recognize that such selfish conduct is impossible. His life was the very opposite. Suffering and pain were the atmosphere in which He moved. His arrival in any village or town was the signal for the exposure of every ill the place knew. The main street looked as though a fire had taken place in some hospital, and its sufferers had been for the time laid there. Cripples, paralyzed, blind, epileptic, possessed, were pressing their attention upon Him as best they could. And when every want had been supplied, and it was possible to go elsewhere, then the circumstances changed, and darker scenes were revealed : hatred, strife, ill-nature, even quarrelling amongst His own friends, in His own family. And when opposition had been met and disarmed, and peace restored, then it was not in the pleasanter and more open spaces of the towns that He was found ; but in the slums, where vice walks abroad with unblushing front, there He could be seen battling hand to hand with sin, unbuckling fetters and loosing chains.

It is, then, quite vain to expect that we shall ever know Him if we shun those aspects of life with which He was most familiar. We might as well hope to know the painter whose art we never looked at, the musician whose music we never heard, or the poet whose poems we never read, as to expect to know the Man of Sorrows without looking at the sorrows He soothed, the sufferings He healed. And this not only because, as we have said, He moved in and out amongst them, but because He bare them : "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses."\* He was not like a doctor, who is more interested in the sickness or pain

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\* S. Matt. viii. 17.

than the patient. The patient, in all cases, was of chief importance. And the effort to help the person as well as cure the disease was one which took the strength out of Him, and so wearied Him that at times, as when His disciples took Him to the boat, He was too tired to walk. His sympathy, indeed, was so intense, so close, that He felt the actual pain the patient was suffering, "bare the sickness," as S. Matthew says. Men's pains and trials were not, then, matters of interest requiring skill and attention, but subjects of thought graven upon His Mind and Heart, which He could not dismiss if He would. And they were His from the patient's point of view, and not merely from the Physician's. He saw how they were felt and regarded. To know Him, then, without knowing suffering would be like knowing Shakespeare without knowing life, or Milton without knowing the Bible, or Bunyan without knowing sin and grace. It cannot be done. So it is that S. Paul, in the expression of his aspiration, adds the knowledge of His sufferings to that of His Person. "That I may know Him . . . and the fellowship of His sufferings." And it is worth noting that he does not simply say "sufferings," but "the fellowship of His sufferings." He was not content with the thought of being amongst sufferers as his Master was, but he desired to know the actual sufferings of the Lord, to have his share in them. If we ask why, we find in the answer a new thought that springs out of sharing our Lord's suffering experience, and that thought is introduced by the phrase, "The power of His resurrection." "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death."\*

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\* Phil. iii. 10.

The Apostle felt that bound up with the personal knowledge of the Lord was the experience of His risen power. How, indeed, could he know Him, unless he had from time to time evidences of this? Christ was now the Risen Lord, and resurrection power was therefore the proof of His living, present interest in His servants. S. Paul naturally, then, longed for practical assurance of this. But where was he likely to find it? Surely, in time of need and difficulty. When all went well, and he felt his powers sufficient for the task he had in hand, he could not realize the Presence of the unseen Partner of his labours. But when he was swept off his feet in some storm like that which overwhelmed him in Jerusalem when the mob tried to murder him, or when he had to face the Cæsar's judgment seat, absolutely alone without a single friend by him,\* then he felt an inrush of Divine Power, which made him realize that the Lord was standing by him and strengthening him. Such an experience was worth a hundred tumults; for such a blessed realization he would face Cæsar's judgment seat as often as his bitterest enemy might desire. He therefore began to take positive pleasure in desperate situations, for they were always occasions for revelations of the living Christ. To be beaten or stoned, to suffer shipwreck and spend a night and day in the deep, to be in danger of drowning or of being waylaid by robbers,† to be hunted from place to place by his countrymen, to be worn out with fatigue or constantly suffering pain, to be starved with cold or from want of food, these were experiences sufficiently severe to have tried the bravest spirit and to have led to defeat, but for one thing, and that was that the more

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\* 2 Tim. iv. 16-18.

† 2 Cor. xi. 25-27.

trying they were, the more certain, the more vivid the realization of the presence of that Friend Who sticketh closer than a brother. He had learnt through prayer that this was to be expected. In suffering from some terrible pain, which he could only describe under the image of a sharp thorn or stake driven into his flesh, he had entreated, not once, but three times running, that he might be spared and the pain taken away. But the answer had come with great definiteness : " My grace is sufficient for thee : for My strength is made perfect in weakness." In other words : " If you will but trust, you will not suffer defeat ; and further, the weaker you are, the more conscious will you be of My divine strength." S. Paul's infirmities, then, whether physical, mental, or spiritual, became not a subject of complaint, but of boasting ; for in them he found, to use his own words, "the power of Christ" resting upon him.\* How much he learnt through them it is impossible to say ; but suffering was, from the time of the discovery of Christ's Presence within it, wholly changed. He rejoiced in it ; just as a wife has rejoiced in the poverty which is to bring her the husband she loves ; as some royalist has rejoiced in the perils that brought him the presence of his king ; as an Alpine climber has rejoiced in the dangerous crags and precipices that led to a new revelation of the presence of God in nature.

Now, the experience of S. Paul has been that of all faithful Christians since his time. S. Stephen, when standing alone, braving the mob of infuriated Jews, found, as we should have expected, that his Master revealed Himself standing, may we not say with open arms, to welcome His brave servant. S. Polycarp, when

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\* 2 Cor. xii. 9.

waiting on the racecourse of Smyrna to be burnt alive, heard, above the derisive yells of the mob, the words, "Polycarp, be strong, and play the man," shewing the nearness of his Captain. So, in modern times, we are told that when a poor lad in Staffordshire had recovered from the effects of being roasted before an iron furnace because he would not deny his faith, he gave as his experience, "I never felt Jesus so near before."

Charles Kingsley, too, speaking of some dark and awful days he had experienced, tells us that he challenged our Lord in such earnest prayer to fulfil His promise that he almost expected Him to appear visibly ; but though He did not do this, He gave him a sufficient answer in the still small voice which brought peace to his soul. Ellen Watson, for a long time a suffering invalid, and feeling the depression that comes with chronic illness, writes : "But I am not, and never shall be again, despairing. At the very worst times, such strength, not my own, has been lent me, that now I know it will not fail. . . . There is something better than happiness ; the blessedness which comes to us in our worst griefs."

Caroline Fox, in her delightful letters, writes : "I have been brought through a sharp little attack of bronchitis, and feel bound to record my sense of the tender mercy that has encompassed me night and day. Though it may have been in part my own wilfulness and recklessness that brought it on, that and all else was pardoned ; all fear of suffering or death was swallowed up in the child-like joy of trust ; a perfect rest in the limitless love and wisdom of a most tender Friend, Whose will was far dearer to me than my own. That blessed Presence was felt just in proportion to the needs of the hour, and the words breathed into my spirit were

just the most helpful ones at the time, strengthening and soothing. This was specially felt in the long, still nights, when sometimes I felt very ill: ‘Never less lonely than when alone with God.’ Surely I know more than ever of the reality of that declaration: ‘This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent.’”

Very different these witnesses are: the apostolic deacon, the bishop, the ironworker, the reformer, the consumptive patient, the aged invalid; but it is the variety of the testimony that witnesses so fully to the reality of the promise: “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee: and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.”\*

Enough has now been said to shew the importance of suffering as an element, I had almost said a sacrament, of knowledge. But it is painfully true that whilst to a comparative few it is illuminated and cheered by the presence of the Lord, others, and they the larger number, know nothing of His presence in it. To them, such experiences as we have referred to appear to be the results of a sanguine imagination. It would be difficult to disprove this to those who were not Christians, but all Christians must be forced to admit that if Christ is alive, and the character the Gospels represent, then it would be more difficult to account for His absence than His presence when His friends are in trouble.

Why, then, is the experience not more common? The reply is easy: lack of faith. One of the effects of trouble or pain is the disturbance of faith. We are

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\* Is. xlivi. 2.

driven in upon ourselves, forced to think of our needs, when we would gladly think of anything else. The central difficulty, at such times, is how to pray. We have neither the will for it nor the power to fashion it. It seems easier to let the storm carry us where it will. And so we continue in the darkness when we might be in the light.

Or it may be that we are more concerned with immediate relief than with the revelation that it brings, and are quite ready to dispense with the latter if only we may have the former. We are not sufficiently convinced of the value of the knowledge of our Lord, and we are ready to barter it, though it is at our very doors, for riddance of the pain or anxiety. We may believe that it will mean a lift into a fuller conception of Christ in His own personal relation to us; but we beg, feverishly and impatiently, that that may come in some other way. It was otherwise with General Gordon, who said of some suffering that he had imposed upon himself: "The experiment is a safe one; it is like going through a severe operation for an illness, with the certainty of ultimate cure." Many, however, do not feel that the experiment is safe; they dare not venture upon the operation, and they pray that they may be saved from it. Who can tell how much of Christ's friendship he has missed through failing to urge, in some darkness or pain, "Nevertheless, not my will, but Thine be done"; through failing to face the suffering and distress in the confidence that he will know, as he never knew before, what it is "to know the Lord."

It is to us often a matter of surprise that those who we know are living very close to Christ should be called upon to submit to stroke upon stroke from His hand. Directly, however, we feel that affliction is bound up

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with knowledge, we cease to wonder. They are learning in the school of suffering, as they could learn in no other way, the knowledge of the Lord. They are drinking from His cup, being baptized with the baptism that He was baptized with, and so growing in a nearness to Him that no mere position can illustrate.

Suffering, then, much as we naturally shrink from it and fear it, is necessary for the personal knowledge of a suffering Lord. It is, then, our duty, if we seek His friendship, to make use of the opportunities suffering gives us, by doing what we can to relieve that which lies in our path, or is to be found in our neighbourhood. It is in the hospitals, the prisons, the homes and haunts of the poor and wretched, that there is most likelihood of meeting Him. "I was in prison ; I was naked : I was an hungred ; I was thirsty ; I was sick" are words the meaning of which we shall know, if we have not learned them before, when we are judged. We shall then be surprised that we avoided just the very places where He to Whom we expressed such devotion was to be found. If we are wise, and really in earnest in our desire to know Him, we shall take advantage of the many opportunities that the sad experiences of life give us, and find Him in His suffering poor.

Secondly, we shall prepare ourselves for the suffering that God may send us. How much the disciples might have learnt from the Crucifixion if they had only given heed to our Lord's teaching about the Cross ; thought about it, and steeled their hearts to expect it. S. John, the only one who had courage to go through that awful experience, had, in the marvellous sign of the water and blood, a testimony to His Master's Divine Person of unspeakable blessedness. This the others missed ; and so it may be with us that, through want of preparation

for our Calvary, we may miss that intimate knowledge of Him that it was intended to bring. Such a preparation means the daily practice of self-sacrifice, the willing shouldering of the cross, the ready will to sympathize with the sufferings of others, the serious and sober consideration of life as a school of discipline, the conquest of the daily cares and worries in the power of the Spirit. Then, when the trial comes, it will not meet us unawares. We shall have known, by anticipation, some of the phantoms that haunt the dark valley of the shadow of death, and perhaps seen in the experience of others that He is always there; seen, perhaps, what Archbishop Benson saw when he sat by the bedside of his dying son. "That he saw Christ," is the Archbishop's witness, "we who watched him are as certain as of anything we know at all." The dark paths and deep valleys are not wholly strange, and as we enter them it is with the sense of wonder that accompanied Charles Kingsley's descent: "I wonder what it will be like!" *i.e.*, what will it be like at the other end, when, having left our friends here, He takes us by the hand, round that bend of the path hidden from the living, which none but those He guides have ever seen, that turn where He reveals Himself in His full glory, and we at last know what it is "to know the Lord"?

## CHAPTER X.

### KNOWLEDGE IN THE HOLY COMMUNION.

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He was known of them in the breaking of bread.—*S. Luke xxiv. 35.*

This cup is the New Covenant in My blood.—*S. Luke xxii. 20.*

**I**N any consideration of the question of knowledge of persons, we cannot ignore the part that Nature plays. We have evidence in the fact that members of the same family usually know one another better than those who are not of the same blood ; and that this familiarity is not merely due to their living with one another under the same roof appears from the fact that twins, who participate more intimately in the same nature, not only resemble one another in face and feature, but also in character and intellect, understanding one another as it is impossible that others in the same family will. But we have a still more interesting proof of the power of nature, in the influence it exercises over husbands and wives. By marriage, two people become, in our Lord's words, “one flesh,” and in the course of years so grow into one another, provided the bond of nature is deepened by love, as not only to know intuitively one another's thoughts, but even to resemble one another in face and character, and that long after the features have lost their plastic power. The same likeness in mind and manner is not seen in two friends who have known one another for many years.

There would seem to be, then, a mysterious unifying

power in the transmission of a common nature ; and the more fully we are able to share in it, the more fully are we likely to know one another. We say "likely," for there is no such necessary sequence of cause and effect as would make it certain that knowledge will follow. As a matter of fact, there are some marriages where this mutual knowledge never follows. It depends very largely on will, and the action of will in self-sacrifice. And the knowledge that was springing up so fast in the first days has, through the selfishness of the one or the other, lost the promise it once had. But though this is so, though it is true that Nature of itself will not create mutual sympathy and knowledge, yet in it lies the possibility. It forms a groundwork or basis for knowledge. The Englishman born and educated in France is more likely to know his compatriots, other things being equal, than his French friends. And it is not untrue to say, with a writer in the *Manchester Guardian*, that "a man of Irish blood landing in Ireland for the first time when a man, has a curious sense of having been in a foreign country and of coming home to one in some ways better known." It is only an illustration of the proverb that blood is thicker than water.

Now, the belief in this is so deeply grounded in our moral system that throughout the world there has been a persuasion that if you can but obtain the nature you then and there obtain the friendship, the knowledge. Hence the emphasis which is laid upon what is called the blood-covenant, a means of contracting friendship which was at one time probably universal. It was done and is still done in some countries, as in Africa, in various ways; sometimes by incisions of the flesh of those who are covenanting one with the other and commingling the blood thus shed ; at other times by drinking it.

Livingstone\* describes a ceremony of this kind that he once witnessed. "Incisions were made on the clasped hands, on the pits of stomach of each, and on the right cheeks and foreheads. A small quantity of blood is taken off from these points, in both parties, by means of a stalk of grass. Each one then drinks the other's blood, and they are supposed to become perpetual friends or relations" He himself unexpectedly became a blood relation ; for, whilst removing a tumour from the arm of a young woman, he was stained with her blood. The woman at once said : " You were a friend before, now you are a blood relation ; and when you pass this way always send me word, that I may cook for you." Stanley and other travellers mention the same custom. The tie formed by it is extremely close. In the East it is believed to be closer than that established by birth ; brothers in the covenant of blood being estimated to be closer than brothers at a common breast,† "blood brothers" being more truly one than "milk brothers." And so far is this idea carried, that "the marriage of a man and woman between whom this covenant exists is held to be incest." Now it is not likely that what has been once an universal custom has no basis of truth. And if we ask what this is, we say at once it is the belief, borne out by a large human experience, that the participation of a common nature is the basis of mutual knowledge and friendship.

Now it would seem, at first sight, as though we had reached here a line of argument for which there was no analogy in the knowledge of our Lord. And yet we must have felt all along that the aim we have set before

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\* *Travels and Researches in South Africa*, pp. 290-296.

† Trumbull : *The Blood Covenant*, p. 13.

us is so high, so entirely beyond our powers, that, unless there is something beyond prayer, work, and suffering, the likelihood of our knowing the Lord as we should wish is but small. How can the finite know the Infinite? How can the unholy know the All-Holy? Is not the position of the agnostic, that man with his limited knowledge cannot possibly know Him Who has no limitations, a reasonable one? So men have thought; but in thinking, they<sup>\*</sup> have not remembered the power of the Lord or the extent of His mercy. The difficulty was once forcibly stated by a working man, whose words suggest the answer. The Bishop of Manchester, in one of his visitation addresses, had been enlarging on the subject of "knowing God," and shewing the unreasonableness of the agnostic's objections. After he had finished, a man in his shirt sleeves, who had been cleaning out a school, came up to him and said: "I am so pleased at what you have said; and now I want to ask you a question. I reckon what you mean is this: If God Almighty means us to know His-sen as He knows His-sen, He'll have to make us like His-sen." The question he came to ask was, how was this going to be done? This, indeed, is the very heart of the subject. In some way we must be made like God if we are to know Him: but how?

Now, we have already seen that a persuasion has existed in the world that to receive a man's blood, *i.e.*, his nature, is to have the potentiality of being made like him. And it is more than interesting to find that the further conviction has arisen that if we would be made like the gods we must receive their blood, or in some other way hold intercommunion with them. As an example of the power supposed to lie in the blood of the gods, we may take the following from the

Egyptian "Book of the Dead." In it the departed soul is described as saying to the god : "Give me your arm ; I am made like as ye"; which words the "Book of Ritual" explains as meaning that the soul has received the blood of the god, by which it is united to him.\* There are many examples of fellowship with the gods through food. In China, India, and Assyria, men were believed to hold communion with the gods either through food, of which the god is supposed to partake, or through the blood of a victim, which the god is believed to receive. And if we turn from heathen records to the Old Testament, we find abundant confirmations of the same expectation.

Every reader will remember the part that blood plays in the foundation or establishment of covenant relationships with God. There is the mysterious rite of circumcision, by which the Father of the Faithful and all his children first entered into covenant with God. And then, as supplementing this individual act of fellowship, we have a description a little later of the national covenant, of the means by which the nation is brought into friendship with God ; and here again it is by blood. First, the words attesting the pledge of Israel's fidelity to God are written down; then peace offerings of oxen are sacrificed, symbolizing the readiness of the people to give their lives to God ; and then, not only is the parchment containing the pledge of loyalty marked with blood, but half the blood is sprinkled upon the altar, which stood for the Presence of God, and half on the people.† It is true that here the people now entering upon their national life do not give their own blood to God ; this would be obviously impossible with a

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\* Bunsen : *Egypt's Place*, v. 174, foll.

† Exod. xxiv.

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million and a half of souls ; but they do it by representation, the slain oxen standing, as it were, for them. It would not be difficult to shew, by reference to all the sacrifices which after this time became a part of the worship of Israel, that blood was as significant in founding or cementing the tie of fellowship between the nation and God and the individual and God, as elsewhere in the world in forming friendship between two individuals.

But, as the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews so clearly shews, such formal external use of blood could not do more than remind the Jews that mutual sacrifice of that which is most precious is the only foundation for fellowship and friendship, could only serve to "the purifying of the flesh";\* something more was necessary to affect the will and produce that inner likeness between man and God which it is the purpose of religion to develop. But no one could guess how that would be provided. It seemed incredible that God Himself would suffer, and so suffer that man might partake of His blood. Through the Incarnation, the inconceivable became possible. God became man, took man's nature into Himself, and was therefore able, if we may dare so to say, to give His blood to man. It is this fact, transcending human thought and imagination, that is laid open to us in those remarkable words of our Lord, which have come down to us in two varying versions, as expressing the truth more forcibly and fully than would be possible by one form : "This is My blood of the covenant, which is shed for many unto remission of sins."† "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, even that which is poured out for you."‡

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\* Heb. ix. 21.

† S. Matt. xxvi. 28.

‡ S. Luke xxii. 20.

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The word “covenant” suggests the friendship and fellowship of which we have been speaking. We think of the covenants made between Jonathan and David, between Abraham and Abimelech, Jacob and Laban, and we then feel that the full meaning of the word is friendship.

Our Lord, then, is speaking of a friendship which He is about to establish with His disciples, and describes it as “new.” If we wish to know what was novel or fresh in the covenant now about to be made in our Lord’s blood, we turn back to one of the old promises of God. Some six hundred years before, God had promised His people, through Jeremiah, that a time would come when He would make a new covenant with His people. This new covenant was to differ from the old in this respect, that it was to be real rather than formal, internal rather than external, a friendship rather than an alliance. “This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”\* From these words it is clear that the difference between the old and the new covenant lay in this: the old was one in which duty largely figured; the new, one of which love was the chief element. The difficulties that men had felt in the past in obeying God’s laws would, to a large extent, disappear. In the future, men would not only under-

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\* Jer. xxxi. 33-34.

stand them, but prefer them ; they would have a natural inclination for them, and so come to know Him Who laid them down. Under the old covenant God was, to a large extent, a stranger to His people ; they did what He bade them because they feared the punishment that would follow if they did not ; but now man was to understand God and His ways, to rejoice in the mysterious discipline of the Cross, to feel by his own life's experience, without any outside teaching, that He was their God.

But how was this to be done ? By blood. "This is My blood of the new friendship. This cup is the new friendship in My blood." That which man had been feeling after in all parts of the world, and expressing in blood covenants, was now to be set forth in such memorable terms as could never be forgotten. As man became united to a stranger, became his blood brother through drinking his blood or commingling his own with it, so man was to become united to the Son of God by drinking His blood. For the blood of which the Lord spake was not to be poured out and then stored up or exposed as in some Holy Grail, it was to be received and drunk : "Drink ye all of this ; for this is My blood of the new friendship."

If we ask how the Lord's blood is to influence man's mental and spiritual life : how it is to become a fountain, as it were, of beautiful thoughts and suggestions so attractive that Christ's service becomes perfect freedom and Christ's law "the perfect law of liberty" ; how it is not only to develop spiritual instincts and desires, but to brace the will to follow them out, we are asking what no man can answer. But we do know that a similar wonder is experienced in the natural life, in the participation of blood or life. And the true significance of

blood lies in its being the means or channel of life, developing certain natural instincts and affections which otherwise we should be without. Not, however, without our co-operation. In all blood covenants the heart of the ceremony lies in the mutual concurrence of both parties. The blood must be from both of those who are covenanting, otherwise the bond is worthless. So our Lord coupled with the reception of His blood the command, "Do this for My memorial." To what is He pointing? What are those whom He invites to partake to do? Surely that which He Himself is doing. But what is that? Shedding His blood for man; giving His body for man. At that time He was offering His life to the Father, by so breaking His body and shedding His blood that He might be wholly ours. "My blood, even that which is" (not shall be) "poured out for you." He calls upon us to do the same. We are to break our lives for our fellow men. We are to drink with thankfulness the cup of discipline which the Father sends us. As He loses something for us, we are to lose something for Him. So the covenant is complete, the friendship is established, and the knowledge of the Lord wells up as a fount of continual blessing.

It is this, as will be remembered, that our Communion Service lays such stress upon. After we have received His life, we are taught to solemnly offer ourselves up, "our bodies and souls, to be a reasonable, holy and lively sacrifice unto" the Father. We give, as it were, our own blood to meet the reception of our Lord's blood. It is to be feared that this is often forgotten: that men are either content with observing the ceremony, as though this were following the Lord's command, or receiving with gratitude and lively faith the blood of the Lord, without remembering that there must be

blood for blood if we are to enjoy the full blessings of the gift. Frequent communions are great opportunities, opportunities for the Lord to plant Himself, as it were, more securely in our hearts and wills, to set in motion those wonderful powers which lie deep in the mystery of all nature, whereby He makes us more and more like Himself; but they call for special sacrifices. Communicants have often been surprised that their Eucharists have been followed by severe trials and difficulties, which seem to be so much out of harmony with the love and peace which the service expresses. They have forgotten that Reception is only one side, that Offering is the other: that to be brought near to the Lord is to be brought near to the fire which burns out all that is selfish and impure; and that if we are slack in providing the sacrifice we have promised, then He will, it may be through strange and seemingly hard ways, Himself supply the occasion.

If Himself He comes to thee, and stands  
Beside thee, gazing down on thee with eyes  
That smite and suffer; that will smite thy heart  
With their own pity, to a passionate peace:  
And reach to thee HIMSELF the Holy Cup,  
Pallid and royal, saying, "*Drink with Me,*"  
Wilt thou refuse? Nay, not for Paradise!  
The pale Brow will compel thee, the pure Hands  
Will minister unto thee; thou shalt take  
Of this communion through the solemn depths  
Of the dark waters of thine agony,  
With Heart that praises Him, that yearns to Him  
The closer for that hour. Hold fast His hand  
Though the nails pierce thine too. Take only care  
Lest one drop of the sacramental wine  
Be spilled, of that which ever shall unite  
Thee, soul and body, to thy living Lord!

H. HAMILTON KING.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE HINDRANCE TO KNOWLEDGE.

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Can two walk together except they be agreed?—*Amos* iii. 3.

**I**T may now be asked why, with such wonderful—we may say unique—opportunities for knowing our Lord, so many who are using them more or less are still hardly removed from that knowledge which we call acquaintanceship. Why is it that He occupies so small a place in their thoughts and affections? The answer is, unfortunately, obvious enough. It is contained in the one word “sin.” We know how it is with human friendship, how apposite is the prophet’s question, “Can two walk together except they be agreed?”\* We know how easily the fellowship is disturbed by coldness and indifference: how our estimate of our friend’s character changes; how surprised we are that he does not see the matter from our point of view: how we confess to disappointment, and feel chilled. And parents will know that whilst it is true that a tender compassion is always present, ready to heal the differences that may have arisen between themselves and one of their children, yet that a child’s obstinate preference for an evil course disturbs mutual confidence and makes further know-

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\* Amos iii. 3.

ledge impossible. For a time, the child's loving appreciation of his father's character is stayed. He believes him to be selfish, hard and cruel.

Now, assuming that the knowledge of our Lord is as real and living as the knowledge of a friend or parent, that it is subject to the same disturbances, we can easily see how sin affects it. For sin is not mere coldness and indifference, but the definite preference of a thought or action that He hates. It not only means that we think we know better than He does, but that we are resolved to shew that we do. It is not merely a difference of taste or feeling, but of principle. It strikes at the root of all confidence and trust, and whilst it remains we not only do not know the Lord, but we have a wrong idea of Him.

We are usually so much concerned with the human consequences of sin that we forget, or do not consider, how it affects Christ, how it hinders His work with us, stays the expression of His love and necessarily exposes us to His anger. His anger! The words are terrible, and yet they must be faced. At first we refuse to listen to such a paradox as "the wrath of the Lamb." We are so accustomed to long-continued states of passive indifference, in which neither love nor hatred are felt, that we cannot realize that the only alternative to Divine love is Divine wrath. Our own attitude towards large numbers of people is one of indifference. We should not care, as we say, whether we ever saw them again. They are nothing to us, and we should probably be annoyed if we were anything to them. Now this state, with which we are very familiar, is unknown to God. The Bible makes it perfectly clear that though He may be angry with man, as He is certainly loving to him, He is never indifferent. The interests are too close and intimate.

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As it is impossible to conceive of a good mother careless about or indifferent to her children's interests or character, as they either excite her joy or indignation, so it must necessarily be with Him Who is called both Father and Love. It can never be a matter of indifference what we do or what we are. If He does not rejoice, He grieves over us. We are always a pleasure or a pain to Him. The thought is quite bewildering as we think of the millions of souls and the number of ties He must necessarily have, and we should be crushed with the magnitude of the thought presented to our minds were it not for the Gospels. They exhibit on a small scale what is always happening. The love of Christ for S. John and the wrath of Christ on the Pharisees are but examples of this double expression of the Divine character. The conversion of a soul to the personal knowledge of God must, as we are told it does, give Him great joy.

Now, bearing this in mind—that our Lord is never indifferent to us—we can understand something of the interference sin causes in our relationships with Him: how it at once hides away all revelations of His presence, brings in misunderstandings of His word, prevents answers to prayer, and in every direction hinders the progress of our knowledge. And not only is this the result of what we may call presumptuous or wilful sins, but also of sins of ignorance and carelessness. For though much less heinous, they yet proceed from the same cause, want of thought and affection for Him. We may quite unintentionally injure our friend's interests, and yet feel that if he had been the first thought in our mind it never would have happened. Now, with our friend, there may be no occasion to reproach ourselves because he did not occupy that

place, but not so with Christ. He must be there or nowhere. And in all our relations with the world or others, His interests must be first considered. Failure to do that involves of necessity sins of ignorance and consequent disturbance of our relations. We see, then, how easily our knowledge of the Lord may be stayed, how quickly our spiritual sight may be blurred and our spiritual hearing dulled. There are the same sights and sounds to-day as yesterday, when we rejoiced in His presence, but we are not the same people ; the malaria of sin has affected our whole spiritual organization, and we can neither see nor hear. In human affairs such an estrangement is the most difficult to repair. It is easy to fall out with our friends, but very difficult to fall in again. We are not only disposed to say that our friend who has damaged our reputation never can be the same to us again, but to believe it. A full reconciliation seems impossible. We are ready to forget the unfortunate affair, to dismiss it from our memory, to be on calling terms again, even to have our quondam friend at our house, but we feel that he can never again be on the same footing. It is true that he has expressed his regret, and we on our part are quite prepared to let bygones be bygones, but the injury has spoiled the old easy familiarity, which has gone never to be recovered. We look upon it as a necessary consequence : and so far from reproaching ourselves for a lack of generosity, consider that, on the whole, we have behaved handsomely. Further knowledge is stayed.

It is well that the Divine reconciliation is not expressed in such prudent and cautious terms, for in that case we should never know the Lord. For personal knowledge, complete confidence is essential. Unless the old position may be ours, we may be servants, but we

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can never be friends. It is this that our Lord makes abundantly clear in His parable of the Prodigal Son. It will be remembered that He told the story as an explanation of His friendly, loving ways with publicans and sinners. These the righteous Pharisee could not understand. Here were outcasts from society, men and women who set law and custom at defiance, and yet were admitted into the friendship of the Lord. Surely such ought to be proved first. But that was not God's way, as He shews. The son comes home from the ways of extravagance, waste and sin; and on his repentance is not first tested, and then, after a course of years, put back into the old place, but at once set there. There is the kiss, attesting his father's warm feeling; the best robe and ring, giving public assurance that the old place is his; the banquet and dancing arranged, that others may not only recognize this, but rejoice in it. Every element is present that may give confidence. All is as it had been before; the reconciliation is complete. The world would criticize such a proceeding, if followed out in human affairs, as an encouragement to sin, as lacking in justice, and generally dangerous to the interests of society; and even the ministry of the Church has at times hesitated to follow the Divine plan in its methods of reconciliation. But whatever may be said as to the difficulties involved in translating the Divine principles into action in the public affairs of the State and Church, there can be no question as to its importance in a home where the parents' moving principle of action is that they may be known. No child can rightly estimate the character of either of his parents as long as he fears he is not fully trusted. Confidence, as we have said, is essential to knowledge.

But, on the other hand, such full and free confidence cannot be given or received where there is no repentance. And repentance is not the simple affair it is ordinarily supposed to be. It is not a regret springing chiefly from a sense of the discomforts which sin brings; it is not sorrow caused by punishment. The penalty often brings a man to himself, makes him hate the course of action that has proved so disastrous, but it is not the moving cause of repentance. That is contained in the word "Father." It is "the goodness of God" that leads a man to repentance. The consequences of sin make a man realize what the old home life was, how generous the treatment, how loving the Father. And the repentance that thus springs up has three elements which prove its genuineness. The first is, a recognition of the outrage to Divine Justice; the second, a recognition of the personal wrong done against the Lord; and the third, a readiness to submit to any penalty that may be ordered.

The words, "I have sinned against heaven," express some sense of the disorder every sin creates. It is not only that we have hurt ourselves—become, as we say, our own worst enemy—but we have injured the Divine Society. We have made its work more difficult, given opportunity to the enemy to blaspheme. Men and women have been led astray by our action to be careless and indifferent; their faith in goodness has been sapped; their belief in the grace of God and the Sacraments seriously hurt.

And springing out of this is a deeper feeling, that we have pained Christ—"I have sinned against Thee"—that, in spite of His continued goodness, we have distrusted Him, preferring our own way; that we have broken our friendship, as though it were a matter of no

importance : that we have treated Him with a dishonour that we should not have shewn our enemy. And this is the fact about sin that gives us most trouble. We do not see how it can ever be mended. For as we look at Him, and remember what we enjoyed with Him, how scrupulously careful He was of all that was best in us, how in every way He developed rather than hindered our freedom, we are amazed at the madness of our independence, and cannot too bitterly accuse ourselves. We are ready to submit to any discipline if we can in some way share in the old home life : and so springs up the third element of repentance, the willingness to submit to the Divine penalty, whatever it may be. That the prodigal in the story was not placed under any discipline must not be taken to imply that the penalty is always remitted. Our Lord is anxious to emphasize the fulness of the reconciliation, and so does not suggest any thought that might be supposed to be inconsistent with it : but, as we know from His teaching elsewhere, the Cross is always present, and no one can become even a learner in His family unless he takes it up. He could give the publicans and sinners His love, but He would not, if He could, have relieved them of the discipline which would burn out their sins.

We see, then, how the knowledge of our Lord, interrupted by sin, may be restored. As Mr. Illingworth says : " Penitence of heart, or contrition, would seem a necessary element in the purification of those who would know God. . . . Who that has ever wronged a parent, a benefactor, a lover, or a friend does not know as a matter of experience not only the naturalness of emotional as distinct from ethical repentance—of sorrow, that is to say, as distinct from mere amendment—but also its necessity before mutual understanding can be

restored, and the increase of that necessity in proportion to the degree of the love wounded and the wrong done? This is not a matter of external propriety, but a psychological law which there is no evading. Without emotional repentance we must part, or remain on a lower level of intercourse, but we cannot grow in intimacy and the insight which intimacy brings. . . . Human analogy is in our favour when we maintain that this character (*i.e.*, the character that would know God) must be penitent as well as progressive, sorrowful of heart as well as resolute of will.\* And when it is remembered that our past is a past of sin, that we have by countless acts made it more and more difficult for us to know our Lord and for Him to know us, we may well be patient with our slow progress, as well as with that discipline which is to purify our minds and consciences to apprehend Him. We are often tempted to complain that our circumstances are harder than justice demands, that God's treatment is harsher than our deserts; but when we say this, we forget that we are sinners, we forget that the Good Physician is dealing with the sick, to whom it would be fatal to allow the freedom that the healthy have; that our knowledge of Him necessarily depends on our purification of character, and that on our submission to His discipline.

The teaching of this chapter cannot be better summed up than in the old Legend of the Face of Christ, which shews in a striking way that the knowledge of Christ is the spring of penitence as well as its goal.

The story runs that in the years long ago, when all men's actions seemed to be affected by their relations to the world of darkness or the world of light, a poor lad

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\* Illingworth: *Personality Human and Divine*, p. 122.

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who had been well brought up, but felt within him the artist's instincts without the power to exercise them, sold himself to the devil on condition that he might have, during a definite period of years, the power of depicting to the life any subject he chose to take. The bargain was struck. The young man speedily became famous, and his pictures brought him enormous sums of money. He married, and purchased a magnificent home. But the ill-gotten gains—and such they were, for the pictures were diabolically seductive and sensual—brought him but little happiness. Quarrels led to the separation from his wife and family, and dissipation to loss of health and premature old age. At last the day came when he knew Satan would claim his side of the bargain. The thought of eternal companionship with the evil and gloomy fiend, whose only aim was to make men miserable, filled him with despair. He sought out the village priest, whom he had hitherto scorned, and told him his awful peril. The priest met him with sympathy and prayer, and bade him return and paint the Face of the Christ. He did so; and presently out of the canvas, in wondrous colours, came the Face of Jesus of Nazareth as the blessed Apostles saw it. As the work proceeded, it produced a strange excitement in the artist. He could not stay working; and yet every fresh effort seemed to give such life to the picture, that it seemed as though it were alive and its subject had come to judge him. At last the feeling was too intense, and he fell to the floor unconscious. The servants sent for the priest, thinking he was dead. He came, and, on seeing him, at once applied restoratives, which brought him to returning consciousness. Directly he opened his eyes the priest told him that he was saved, for Satan's hour was past,

and he was now the servant of Him at Whose feet he lay. He reverently covered the picture with a veil and began life anew. He craved absolution, but the priest deferred it till he had learnt the lesson the Face of Christ would give him. So long as the veil lay upon It he found that his old self began to reassert itself; directly he took it off, he began to think thoughts which were strange to him. His old pictures became a source of horror instead of pleasure, and he beggared himself in buying them back to destroy them. Having done this, he again sought absolution; but the blessing was postponed, for the lesson was not fully learned. Again the Face of Christ exercised its strange influence. It made him think of his wife and children, and he rested not till he had them back with him in his narrow cottage. Surely now the Church's forgiveness would be his. But no; still more had to be learned. He gazed at the Face, and wondered what the new lesson would be; and then bethought him of the grief, the pain, the loss he had occasioned Him Whose eyes seemed to penetrate the depths of his being. Two feelings now began to struggle within him: bitter grief for the way in which he had treated the Christ, consuming love for Him Who yet remained patient; and in the heat of this internal conflict his heart brake, and he died. Again the priest was summoned; and, as he looked on the calm peace that had succeeded the look of anguish on the face of the artist, he cried, "He has now what he sought for, the peace of God which passeth all understanding."

The legend embodies for us two truths of great importance: the one that no past, however black, may prevent our knowing the Lord, that this depends solely on the desire to do so, and that if the effort be but strong enough, Christ will be revealed; the other is

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that our growth in that knowledge depends on our persistence in the path of penitence. The legend must not be pressed. No distinction can be drawn between the freedom gained by the revelation of Christ and His full absolution. The latter, when it falls on the truly penitent heart, always brings a revelation, and therefore freedom. But the gradual development of penitence concurrently with the progressive knowledge of the Lord is most true, and it is only in its last stages that we realize what the Psalmist expressed so forcibly in the words, "Against Thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight."\*

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\* Ps. li. 4.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE ASSURANCE OF KNOWLEDGE.

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Hereby we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.—*1 John ii. 3.*

WE have already spoken of the ways in which we may know our Lord and of the hindrance which sin presents. It may now be reasonably asked by one who is persuaded that this knowledge is the greatest gift that God can give, whether there is not some definite sign by which he may be assured that he has it. He may say with truth that he is sometimes inclined to doubt his own experience; that he may be regarding as manifestations signs which are simply coincidences; that he may be supposing that he is growing in knowledge because his feelings are from time to time stirred in singing some hymn or in listening to some sermon. He desires, quite rightly, to find some external test which may make this knowledge a matter of certainty. His very modesty makes him seek for some characteristic mark, less selfish, less uncertain, by which he may test the manifestations which he believes are now and again accorded to him.

It is this that the Apostle who, perhaps, knew our Lord best gives us. He writes, as though he had our difficulty in view, “Hereby we do know that we

know Him, if we keep His commandments."\* And if we ask what he means by His commandments, he replies: "This is His commandment, That we should believe on the Name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another."† Any one who fails to do this, and yet imagines that he knows God, "is a liar, and the truth is not in him."‡

There is no occasion to say anything about faith in the name of Jesus Christ; that we can see is obviously necessary for the knowledge of Him. It is not, however, so obvious how the love of others is a test of knowledge. And yet that it is so is plain, by such other passages from his letter as "Every one that loveth . . . knoweth God,"§ and "he that loveth not, knoweth not God."|| In these words S. John seems to take for granted that the man who loves, no matter in what other ways he fails, knows God; while the man who misses this, and yet possesses other qualifications, knows not God. Knowing God and loving our neighbour are identical.

Here, then, we have the test we are seeking. There can be no mistake about its reliability, and none whatever as to the kind of assurance it conveys. It is a sign quite unmistakable in character, as little due to fancy as it is to our own power. It is not that interest in everybody which is born of curiosity, nor that general amiability of temperament which finds its own pleasure in having its relations with others as smooth as possible. It has no limitations, whether of family, country, or creed, though it is necessarily stronger and deeper where there is some natural basis of sympathy. It is not simply an enthusiasm for humanity at large, but rather devotion to the individuals composing it. It

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\* 1 John ii. 3.      † 1 John iii. 23.      ‡ 1 John ii. 4.  
 § 1 John iv. 7.      || 1 John iv. 8.

is generally supposed that it is easier of cultivation than the love of God ; and yet that, as we have seen, has a groundwork, a starting place, which this has not. We know that God loves us ; and we know also that He, with His adorable perfections, is lovable. To know Him is to love Him. These advantages are, for the most part, absent in the claim that our neighbour has upon us. In our family and amongst our friends we may be loved, and, therefore, able to love ; but the world, which is made up of those whom we ought to love, is indifferent to us. There are also those whom to know is to love ; but there are others, so disfigured by vices or selfishness, that we are afraid lest further knowledge should engender hatred rather than love. If, then, we find that a love of these is growing up within us, we may be sure that we know Him Who loved all men and gave Himself for them. But how can it be produced, and what has knowledge to do with it ?

Now, it is not difficult to see that if we know God we shall be filled with love. God is Love, and to know love is to catch its spirit. Let us take an illustration to make this clear. We rise one morning rather depressed, not only feeling out of sorts with our work, but with those with whom we live. An invitation from a friend near by lies on our table. He is, so far as our experience goes, the most perfect embodiment of human love that we know. Feeling that our work is likely to drag heavily under the present circumstances, and that time can be spared, we gladly avail ourselves of the opportunity his kindness affords us. On the road to his house we overtake some unfortunate who appeals for alms. We say something sharp and pass on, indignant with the man's persistence and our own curt rejection. We turn in to our friend's

grounds, and in the cheerful bright look of the men about the place seem to see the reflection of the master's kindness. The servant who answers the door has the same welcome look on her face. Whilst waiting in the drawing room, a child of the house comes in to entertain us and apologize for her father's temporary absence. Here, again, we find the same disinterested affection that we had noticed before, and in the child's efforts to please we are already beginning to feel sensibly better. At last our friend enters, evidently glad to see us. There is no fuss, no patronage, no forced appearance of amiability, as though he were fulfilling a duty which required a stimulus. He is at once interested in our affairs, dismisses our gloom with his sunshine, our depression with his hopefulness. Whilst we are talking, the poor wretched creature who asked our help appears at the door. We make some remark about the nuisance of such people, but find that our friend looks pained. With apology for deserting us for a moment, he leaves the room; and we presently see him giving the same care, attention and sympathy to the wanderer that he gave us. He takes him to a bench under the tree, where plain food is provided, and he further gives him some safe means of help in a recommendation or letter to some acquaintance in a neighbouring town. Our friend returns to us, giving himself with the same unrestrained freedom and joy to our needs that he had shewn before he left us. We spend the morning in a home of sunshine and love, and return to our house with changed feelings and new hopes. The half-written letter of angry remonstrance with some business man we throw into the waste paper basket; the promise we had made to get a clerkship for a friend's son we set about fulfilling; the long,

expected visit to cheer a dull neighbour is at last paid. The cloud that lay so heavily over our work has lifted. We have known love, and have already begun to enjoy the taste of loving. Love has entered our being, and is now finding its way out. "Every one that knoweth love, loveth." This is a human experience, an experience every one has probably felt and enjoyed. Its effect may not have lasted long, but we have known it.

Now, that love which we have imagined is only the reflected love of Christ. It bears the same resemblance to His love that moonlight does to sunlight. It is beautiful, but has neither the strength nor warmth of Christ's love. Let us suppose that, instead of our friend's house, the house had been that of Christ. The Apostles would have been the servants. Imagine what a welcome we should have had as we passed within the circle of His society. Think how S. Peter and S. John would have given themselves to us; how eager they would have been that we should know Him, and thus get rid of our sadness. And as we waited our turn, possibly we should see Him at work with some sufferer who had sought His help. How gentle, and yet how firm! how patient, and yet encouraging! How absorbed and concentrated in the work! and, when once the human chord was touched, how immediate the response! "Lord, I believe: help Thou mine unbelief!" And then let us try and realize what it would have been as He turned from that happy, joyous sufferer, now released from his pain, to ourselves. How rested we should feel as we came under the brightness of that same strong love: how strengthened and encouraged as we found the same devotion to our interests, the same patient consideration, the same insight into our

difficulties, and anxiety to free us from them. Can we suppose that if we had once known it we should be ever quite the same again? Perhaps, as we passed away, we should hear the words, "Freely ye have received, freely give," and rejoice in carrying to others the blessing we had received. To have known His love would be to love.

But here, again, it may be said: "We are ready to grant that had we been in His fellowship, that Society which He founded, we should have a larger trust in men, a deeper compassion for their needs, and a more sincere love for their virtues, but that experience is denied us. We are obliged to imagine instead of realize, to draw a picture from the mind instead of from life." And yet there are others who have been in our position who have rivalled the Twelve in their devotion to Humanity, their love for the individual members of the Race, though they have been without the daily sensible experience of His love that the Apostles experienced. Let us take the case of S. Paul. Consider his outlook on Human Society before he knows Christ. The world is for him divided into two parts, the one infinitely larger than the other, consisting of "dogs of Gentiles"; the other, of the "sons of Abraham." It is nothing to him that in the larger class there have been books and characters produced which rival some of those that Israel has known. It is nothing to him that pride, arrogance and obstinacy are the characteristic marks of his countrymen. The larger half are doomed to destruction, the smaller chosen for salvation. He has the narrowness and bigotry of a Spanish Inquisitor; and when the Christian sect sprang up, he was foremost in hunting it to death. He not only gladly assumed the responsibility for Stephen's death, but would have

exterminated the whole body of the disciples had he been able. He then passes under the experience of the love of Christ. He sees it as expressed to others, as realized by himself, and a change takes place which is, on every other ground than the knowledge of Christ, inexplicable. The "dogs of Gentiles," whom he had cursed and spat on, are the men whose liberties he now takes on his own shoulders. The Jews who, in their hatred of the renegade, would gladly have put him to death, are not only met by love and devotion, but by a readiness to be "wiped out of the book of the living," if by so doing he could save them. All narrowness disappears. He takes the whole human race into his large heart. He would win every one, for he loves every one. To the Jews, he became a Jew; to those under the law, as under the law; to those without law, as one without law; to the weak, as one weak: he became all things to all men, that he might win some.\* And this devotion was not so catholic as to cease to become individualistic. We have only to turn to the last chapter of his letter to the Romans to see how many and intimate his friendships were. He had known love, and henceforth he loved men with all the passion of a regenerate nature.

But S. Paul is not a solitary illustration of the principle we are trying to explain. History records many others; so many, indeed, that it would be impossible to set down the names even of those whose memory our own country cherishes. They knew the Lord, and therefore loved the brethren. They made the old Gospel scenes live before them, and in the light that fell from them they went forth with an incredible compassion for men's needs. To be a Christian was to be in love with all mankind. We in these days, to whom such a deep and broad catholic love is strange,

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\* 1 Cor. ix. 21-22.

ask how it is that they found all men sufficiently interesting to love. To our eyes the mass of mankind seems dull and commonplace, and such features as it has often repel rather than attract us. The foreigner, the aristocrat, the middle-class people, the poor, as they come under our notice, awaken a momentary curiosity, but it soon disappears, and they are quickly dismissed from our mind. These apostolic Christians, on the other hand, saw in the Asiatic, the Greek and the Roman, in the proconsuls, merchants, and poor slaves something that was quite independent of racial or class distinctions; and that something excited their love. What was it?

In the first place, they had learned through their discipleship in His school to have no respect of men's persons as such. As S. James expresses it in his Epistle, they had not the faith of Jesus Christ with respect of persons;\* it was impossible that they could have. The dress, manner, speech of those with whom they met had a very subordinate place in any estimate they passed on the men who sought their help. And, in the second place, being gifted with the Spirit of Love, they had insight sufficient to penetrate beneath these accidental circumstances and see the image of Christ, which they knew to be implanted within them. Somewhere His feature, and that a new one, would be found. They worked in the faith of it, and often had the joy of finding this "pearl of great price" buried beneath a heap of moral rubbish. "The Head of every man is Christ."† The image of every man is in Christ, for in Him man was made;‡ the spirit of every man is His candle,§ to use the quaint metaphor of Scripture, waiting to be illuminated by the light of His divine love. No one, then, could be commonplace; no one

\* S. James ii. 1. † 1 Cor. xi. 3. ‡ 1 Cor. ii. 10. § Prov. xx. 27.

could be dull. Lack of interest shewed ignorance of Christ's mind ; lack of love shewed ignorance of Christ's heart. To know is to love.

But it may be asked, in conclusion, What about the vicious, the tyrannical, the brutal? Can they be loved? The answer is, Did He love them? It is true that before Caiaphas, Herod and Pilate He was in the main silent; to them He made no moving appeals, gave no declarations of His love: but under such conditions the passage of love was impossible, the channel was dammed up, and any expression would have done more harm than good. To all three, however, He gave the best that was possible, the opportunity that was most likely to bring them to repentance. It may not be possible always to express our love, but this ought to be, as it was with Him, always ready for expression. Even in the very worst cases, we have only to place ourselves by imagination in the circumstances that they have known from their earliest years to feel deep compassion for the difficulties in which their lives have been involved. If they have fallen among thieves, been wounded and left half dead, it is our part to try with infinite patience to bring them round, for that was the work of the Good Samaritan, Whose steps we ought to follow and Whose Mind we desire to know.

And we may further remember that, however striking the contrast may be between the rudeness, coarseness and sensuality of the degraded, and the refinement and gentleness of those who have been brought up under happier circumstances, that contrast is not so great as that which exists between us and Christ. \*A story is told of a Swedish lady who was for long repelled by a little boy in a Home, over which she watched with

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\* *Step by Step*, written by Miss Ebba de Ramsay, p. 56.

much devotion. He was not only repulsive in feature and complexion, but had little else than his power of crying to distinguish him from a corpse. He never seemed to take notice of her, but only scratched her, as he did everybody he could reach, particularly aiming at people's eyes,—thus he had some intellect, at least the instinct of doing evil. The tenderness of his godmother's heart was sorely tried, and she began to despair of giving any real help. One Sunday she dreamed a dream. In her dream she saw herself in the lap of Christ. She was amazed at her own ugliness and foulness, at the contrast between herself and His purity and beauty. And yet His love saw no hindrance; It overleapt the barrier of moral degradation, and fastened with all Its strength on her soul. When she awoke, she saw the meaning. A spirit of undefinable sympathy and compassion filled her soul. She bent down over the little one, and did what she had never done before, kissed it. That kiss awakened a response in the heart of the child, who gave her back a smile so sweet that she had never seen one like it before. The child was conquered. The story expresses a great truth. We, too, may well feel with the great Apostle that, when all things are taken into consideration, "I am the chief of sinners," *i.e.*, no case is so bad as ours; and the recollection ought to move us, as it did him, to great tenderness and compassion. There are, then, no impossibilities with love. We cannot excuse ourselves on the ground that the Apostles' assurance of Christ's love was necessarily different from ours. If we know Him, we too shall love.

We can now understand why our Lord laid such stress on His disciples' "abiding in Him" and "abiding in His love."\* It was the knowledge of Him and His love that would be the source and spring of the know-

ledge and love of mankind. If we ask what was meant by "abiding," we can hardly doubt that it was the definite study and thought of Him, the frequent communion and fellowship with Him, the countless acts of faith in Him, the intelligent and reverent use of all those means which He has provided for our knowing Him better. Knowledge is the spring of conduct ; and conduct, especially that side of it which relates to our brethren and neighbours, is the measure of knowledge.

Love, then, is the assurance of the knowledge of the Lord. As we find that not only the people we meet are becoming more interesting to us, but their needs and difficulties are exciting in us a deep compassion, as we find that those to whom we are by kinship or friendship attached are becoming more and more to us, then we may be sure that we are growing in the knowledge of Christ. It may be that to some who are conscious of this enthusiasm, not only for humanity but for individuals, the Christ presented to them in sermons and books is strange. Of such we say, they may not know the presentation, but they know the real Christ that lies behind it, otherwise such a love as that which they express would be impossible. He will be no stranger to them when they meet. But, on the contrary, he to whom the world of men and women is dull and tasteless, he who feels no warmth in looking into the face of a little child, he who has no loves, no compassions, then, though he could tell every line in the Gospel portrait and speak eloquently of the faith his Christ inspires, he does not really know Him. Nay, his very profession is a falsehood ; for he that saith, "I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments," the chief of which is that we love one another, "is a liar, and the truth is not in him."\*

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\* 1 John ii. 4.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE SON IN HIS RELATION TO THE FATHER.

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The Son can do nothing of Himself.—*S. John v. 19.*

**I**N the course of our study of the personal knowledge of the Son, it has no doubt been felt by some that we have as yet said nothing of the knowledge of the Father. Surprise may have been expressed that that doctrine which has, through the labours of Maurice, Erskine, Kingsley and others been of such great service in clearing away misconceptions of the Atonement, as well as in establishing on firm grounds the truth that God is essentially Love, has not been alluded to, and that all the attention has been concentrated on the Second rather than the First Person of the Holy Trinity.

“Do you know the Father?” was the pathetic question which, according to Dean Stanley, Erskine once asked of a Scotch shepherd. “Do you know the Father?” not “Do you know Jesus Christ?” It was natural, perhaps, in the fervour that the restoration of the doctrine of the Divine Fatherhood caused that the question should take this shape; and yet, as we shall see, the more direct and definite form of the question would have been, “Do you know Jesus Christ?” We may, however, be told to look at our Prayers, at the Liturgies, nay, at the Lord’s

Prayer itself, and see whether in devotion we are not bidden to think chiefly of the Father; to look at the Psalms, the Church's Prayer Book for centuries, and see whether it is not the knowledge of the eternal God that incites and stirs human praise; to listen to criticism that has been, and is being, passed by those whose judgment has weight, on our Hymns Ancient and Modern, which is that the collection as a whole departs from the Christian standard in having more rather than fewer hymns addressed to the Son; nay, to look at the Gospels and there see for ourselves that the teaching of our Lord is in the main a teaching of the Father.

The answer to this criticism is, we think, contained in our Lord's words: "No man knoweth . . . who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal Him."\* "I am the Way. . . . No man cometh unto the Father, but by Me." The study of the personal knowledge of the Father must first be concentrated on the Son. Necessarily so, because there is no certain revelation of God except in the Son. That, indeed, was the object of the Incarnation, to make known the Father. The wish expressed by S. Philip, "Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us,"† was a natural one. It was not born of theological discussion, was not the offspring of a religious philosopher, but was the earnest question of a working man. It is, then, widely representative of the feeling of all serious minded men that if the Father, the great Jehovah, could be seen and known, there would be nothing further to ask for. We long to get behind the outward, and see the inward that sustains it; to push behind the phenomena of nature, and find ourselves in His presence Who made them; to pass from the vision

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\* S. Luke x. 22.

† S. John xiv. 8.

of God manifest in the Flesh to that which men have called the Beatific Vision. And yet to us as to him, made up as we all are of flesh as well as spirit, there is but one answer: "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father."\* Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, in spite of the natural limitations that the outward presents in form, language and thought, is the best, the only manifestation of the Father that is possible to us, that would be in the least intelligible. And it is the work of the blessed Spirit to carry us through these limitations, to enable us to penetrate behind the form and language of the Incarnate Son—"the veil" of His flesh, as it is called—and to shew us in and through the Son, the Father. The study of the Son, then, never rests in the Son, but carries us beyond Him to the Father, to Whom the Son is the Way. We may, therefore, nay, must predicate all that we learn of the Son as belonging truly to the Father. His love of the publicans and sinners, His pity for the children and the weak, His sympathy with suffering are as truly attributes of the Father as they are of the Son. He is not more loving, more tender or compassionate, nor is He less intolerant of pride and hypocrisy. The Son is "the express image of His substance."† We are not, then, ignoring the Father in our study of the Son; nay, we are taking the surest steps towards knowing Him.

At the same time, the question directs our attention to a side of the subject which we have not yet considered. We have so far thought of our Lord as He is in Himself. We have looked at all such helps as may lead us to understand Him as He stands before us in His

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\* S. John xiv. 9.

† Heb. i. 3.

relation to men. We shall, however, be missing very much if we do not look at Him in His relation to the Father. This relationship is, as we learn from the Gospel of S. John, brought very prominently before us in our Lord's discourses. When rebuked because His miracles were wrought on the Sabbath day, it was sufficient to say that it was the Father's work, done by His express desire: when charged with false teaching, the reply is, "My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me."\* His Divine Sonship is ever before us; and, unless we study its main features, we shall not only fail in knowing the Son as we ought, but also in knowing the Father. That this was from the first clearly apprehended by the disciples is manifest from any study we make of the way in which they learnt to know Who our Lord was.

Every thoughtful reader of the New Testament who starts with a clear conception of the Jewish doctrine of the Unity of God, who remembers that the Creed which S. John and S. Peter and the other Galilean Apostles said, probably every day of their life, was "The Lord our God; the Lord, He is One,"† may have wondered how it was that men whose minds were not trained to nice theological distinctions came to confess their Master as God without a violent break with the past. How did they come to be Christians without ceasing to be essentially Jews? How could they, who had learned that God was One, and who were prepared to die for that faith, ever recognize that in this unity of Godhead there were different Persons? That they learned it by experience we know: for in no sense was the apostolic body a theological college, with dogmatics

\* S. John vii. 16.

† Deut. vi. 4; S. Mark xii. 29.

for its main subject. What, then, was the experience by which the great dogma of God's Unity was carried safely and uninjured, and yet made ready for the reception of a new life-giving element?

In the first place, our Lord reiterated again and again their own dogma with the same intensity of conviction that they were accustomed to hear it repeated by their own teachers. He evidently held it as they did. When asked by one of the scribes which was the first commandment, He repeated their own creed, "Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God, the Lord is One."\* And this public expression of His own convictions is emphasized by the prayer which He made in the hearing of the Apostles, in which He addressed His Father as the Only True God.†

In the second place, though they gradually found themselves, through the lofty claims He made to be their Judge and their chief object of desire, asking, as He did, for an affection prior to husband, wife, father or mother, giving Him a reverence and devotion that they had formerly only associated with Jehovah, yet they had no thought of two Jehovahs. It was always Father and Son.

At first, no doubt, their idea of Sonship was not far removed from an exalted human sonship, as their conception of the Messiah was not very different from that of a Jewish Prince who should be a universal monarch. It is true that such sayings as "My Father is greater than I," "I and My Father are One,"‡ sounded very strangely if they came from the lips of one who was only a human son. Any comparison that any man sought to

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\* S. Mark xii. 29.

+ S. John xvii. 3.

‡ S. John xiv. 28; x. 36.

set up between himself and God was clearly absurd ; the fact, then, that He did it must of itself point to a personality higher, more august than that of a creature. Yet it is doubtful how far they took in or remembered such extremely difficult thoughts. Some scenes in which the claim was implied could never be forgotten. There was that one, for example, when the Jews took up stones to stone Him for blasphemy in claiming equality with God. How quiet His bearing ! How free from any disclaimer was His reply ! How He assumed that the One sanctified by the Father and sent into the world must be One with the Father.\*

But these words and scenes were not easy to understand, and the Apostles did not, till after Pentecost, attempt to harmonize the apparently conflicting truths that their experience of Him and His teaching was continually creating. They then learnt as an inviolable truth that He was Son, as they knew that Jehovah was Father. Now, what did this mean ? It meant nothing less than a fresh discovery : for it meant that all that side of life which had been associated with contempt, the side of dependence and obedience, was equally divine with that side of life which the world specially commended, the side of independence and authority. He Who gradually obtained more and more of their homage, till they gave Him equal honour with the Father, was continually associated in their minds with those characteristics the world never understood : the passive virtues, as they may be called, meekness, dependence, receptiveness. He Whom they gladly acknowledged to be their King was yet their servant, ministering to their needs as none had ever done before. He Whom they

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\* S. John x. 36.

knew to be the Deliverer of the world claimed no original power whatever: "The Son" (it is to be noted that He does not say "Son of Man") "can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do";\* or, in stronger language, "I can of Mine own self do nothing."† He Whom they recognized as the Prophet greater than Moses, yet forbade them to suppose that He had Himself formed His teaching, that it was His in any independent sense. "My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me."‡ Indeed, it was so clear, that in some way He Who seemed above all rule and authority was yet under it, that the Roman centurion, heathen though he was, appealed to it as a proof that He could heal His servant without seeing. "I *also* am a man set under authority; and I say unto this man, Go, and he goeth; and to that man, Do this, and he doeth it."§

The world, indeed, was tired of this continual reference to Another, and rejected Him largely on the ground of it. They preferred that anyone who came amongst them as a teacher or leader should come in his own name. *That* was the manly thing to do, to be independent, to stand on your own ground. Our Lord knew this, and rebuked the Jews for sharing it. "I am come in My Father's Name, and ye receive Me not: if another come in his own name, him ye will receive."|| But, though neither the world nor the Church appreciated it, it appealed to the religious sense of the disciples. Knowing Him as they did, they could see that it did not proceed, as it might have done with any one else, from weakness or cowardice. It was not an endeavour to shelter His actions or statements under

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\* S. John v. 19.      † S. John v. 30.      ‡ S. John vii. 16.

§ S. Luke vii. 8.

|| S. John v. 43.

the name of the Great Invisible, Who could not be challenged for confirmation or denial. No one was so strong, so courageous, so absolutely fearless as He was. Even His enemies admitted that He cared not for the person of men. Dependence, Sonship, Obedience were divine, then. The superiority attached to fatherhood and the inferiority that belonged to sonship, the dignity attached to authority and the contempt associated with obedience needed correction. It was as great to obey as to command; as divine a thing to carry out a plan as to originate it; as full of dignity to be a good son as a good father. Such a recognition gradually carried with it the conception that the living God, embodying in Himself, as He must necessarily do, all perfections, must in some way have these opposite characteristics. It was not difficult, then, to acknowledge that the Son was God as the Father was God.

Now, this fresh knowledge of God, which had been built up by their experience of what their Master had said and done, was a knowledge that they and the world sorely needed; a knowledge that nearly nineteen centuries have failed to completely establish; but a knowledge that, when entertained, brings real power, according to the promise: "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent."\*

In the first place, it helps us in the life of sonship. This, whether experienced in the work of a servant, a clerk, or a clergyman, presents the greatest difficulties. It is easier to exercise authority than to obey; pleasanter to give orders than to carry them out; more natural to domineer than to submit. We need, as Mr. R. K.

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\* S. John xvii. 3.

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Hutton reminds us in his famous essay, "The Incarnation and Principles of Evidence," "the inspiration and present help of a perfect filial will. We cannot conceive the Father as sharing in that dependent attitude which is our principal spiritual want. It is a father's perfection to originate, a son's to receive. We crave sympathy and aid in the receptive life. We need the will to be good as sons, and to this the vivid faith in the help of a true Son is essential. Such a revelation alone makes humility divine rather than human, eternal instead of temporary and finite; such a revelation alone refers the origin of self-sacrifice to heaven rather than earth."

It is, then, by contemplating Him in His eternal submission to the Father, in His joy at doing His Will, in His continuous upward look that we learn the glory of obedience, the honour that belongs to the life of dependence. "I am among you as he that serveth" is not only the expression of Christ's life, but the motto of Divine living. It may be said that the analogy fails, because the Will of the Father was always good, whereas the will of those under whom we are set is sometimes harsh and often mistaken. But was that Will always seen as desirable? What does the agony in Gethsemane which was expressed in the words, "Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me: nevertheless not My will, but Thine, be done,"\* mean, but that for the complete entering into our needs He allowed the Divine Will to be for the time obscured, and that He blessed it even when hidden? Even, then, when we see not, there is a virtue in obedience; nay, it may be truly said that obedience is never tested till the path along which it points is unintelligible.

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\* S. Luke xxii. 42.

The independence, then, which is a characteristic feature in every department of life, which is made so much of and so loudly applauded by those who are interested in our taking a stand, is not of God. It is true that the oppression of others, the maintenance of a great principle, may justify, nay, demand an attitude of opposition; but how clear the case must be before we change the normal spirit of the Christian life for the abnormal. How positive we must be before we change the attitude of dependence, which, perhaps, belongs to our position, and, therefore, claims first recognition, for that of independence. And then, when the stand is taken, how careful to catch His spirit Who shewed even before Pilate and Herod quiet calmness and dignified submission rather than the force of legions of angels which was at His command.

Again, we say, as in the Chapter on "Suffering," we can only know Him if we are willing to share His mind. And the knowledge of that mind carries us further than our relations towards those set over us. One stands to us in that same absolute relation that the Father stands to the Son. Our Lord expresses it in these words: "As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me."\* Christ, then, is our Lord and Master. To live by *Christ* is to be absolutely, entirely and continuously dependent upon Him. It is the recognition that no other rule of life is possible for us but that which He Himself expresses: "I can do nothing of Myself"; "As I hear, I judge"; "My teaching is not Mine." It is to be taken up into His life: to be what the branches are to the vine; to derive all our physical,

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\* S. John vi. 57.

intellectual and spiritual strength from Him. It is to recognize frankly that we can do nothing safely but what we see Christ doing, *i.e.*, what we recognize as a principle in His life.\* It is to go forth to our work in Christ's name, to acknowledge His power in it, and to refer whatever success we may obtain to Him. It is to realize, not as a theological dogma, but as a present fact, that we are in Christ and that Christ is in us, that He is the Head and we are the members. It is to feel, as an ever present consciousness, that our work is nothing in itself, though great in Him.

Emerson, in his essay on "The American Scholar," tells us that "it is one of those fables which, out of an unknown antiquity, convey an unlooked-for wisdom; that the Gods in the beginning divided Man into men, that he might be more helpful to himself, just as the hand was divided into fingers to answer its end. The old fable," he goes on to say, "covers a doctrine ever new and sublime; that there is one Man—present to all particular men only partially, or through one faculty; and that you must take the whole society to find the whole Man."† The fable and the comment are more true than even Emerson himself recognized. Christ is that one Man, and we are all parts of Him: "the priest, the scholar, the statesman, the producer, the soldier," the old and the young, the man, the woman, the child are, as it were, fingers of that One Human Hand which sustains our world, and which, in the language of the Psalms, "bears up the pillars" and guides the destinies of the universe. How foolish and absurd, not to say how sinful, for the member to follow out his own

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\* S. John v. 15.

† Emerson : *Miscellanies*, p. 63.

little plans, his own private ends! In that case, the Christ not acting in him, man becomes a thing. "The planter," to quote Emerson's words again, only substituting Christ for Man, "sent out into the field to gather food, is seldom cheered by any idea of the true dignity of his ministry. He sees his bushel and his cart and nothing beyond, and sinks into the farmer instead of Christ on the farm. The tradesman scarcely ever gives an ideal worth to his work, but is ridden by the routine of his craft, and the soul is subject to dollars. The priest becomes a form; the attorney, a statute book; the mechanic, a machine; the sailor, a rope of the ship." And the state of society, where the Head Who keeps all together is not recognized, becomes one in which "the members have suffered amputation from the trunk, and strut about so many walking monsters—a good finger, a neck, a stomach, an elbow, but never a man." It is not merely that, through failure to recognize our part in Christ and Christ in us, we become weak, but that we become nothing: gradually lose our dignity as men, and sink into decaying forces of humanity, scarcely distinguishable from the animals about us.

Christ's relationship to His Father, then, is a subject likely to prove most fruitful when we remember that it is the Pattern set for our imitation: that we are to be to Him what He was and is to the Father: that our glory, as His, lies in Another; that our life, as His, lies in Another: that only as we abide, consciously, intelligently and continuously in Him, can the magnificent future reserved for us be attained.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST AND UNITY.

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That they may be one, even as We are One : I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected into one.—*S. John xvii. 22-23.*

WE have seen in the last chapter what effect the knowledge of our Lord as the Son of God must have upon our personal lives, how it will strengthen and develop the life of dependence ; in this chapter we propose to continue the subject further, and see the influence the same truth will have upon our relations with others, whether in the home or the Church.

It is clear from our Lord's words in *S. John xvii. 22, 23*, quoted above, that He hopes to see perfected in the world the same unity as is found in the Divine relations of the Persons of the blessed Godhead. "There is," writes Bishop Westcott, "so to speak, an interchange of the energy of the Divine life ('*Thou in Me, and I in Thee*') which finds a counterpart in the harmonious relations of the members of the Church." And again : "As the Divine Unity consists with a variety of Persons, so, too, the final unity of men does not exclude, but perfectly harmonizes, the separate being of each in the whole."

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\* Westcott : *Gospel of S. John*, p. 246.

It is, then, our duty to weigh well such words as those our Lord gives us in that most pathetic prayer which He made before He died, to try to discover what elements there are in that glory which He gave His disciples that they might be one, "even as We are One: I in them and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected into one." In such words He seems to imply that if we really know Him, *i.e.*, in His relationship to the Father, that we shall learn the true secret of unity. Many have forgotten this. They are looking for unity in the removal of tests, barriers, obligations; they are considering what number of subjects may be looked upon as common subjects, what others may be dismissed as unimportant; they are looking earthward instead of heavenward. Carlyle, however, saw this was wrong. He taught us that "only in looking heavenward, not in looking earthward, does what we can call union, mutual love, society, become possible." We look, then, at the Divine relationship of Father and Son to which our Lord points us: to the words, "One, even as We are One"; "One; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee." And looking, we find three principles of unity:—

- (1) Identity of nature;
- (2) Distinctness of relationships;
- (3) Love.

(1) *Identity of Nature.*—

We are all familiar with those great words of the Creed for which the Church contended so earnestly, "Of one substance with the Father"; and if we have read their history, read how all division would have ceased if the party of Athanasius had but agreed to the substitution of one Greek letter for another, had but agreed to substitute the words "of like substance" for those "of one substance," we may have wondered

at an obstinacy which seemed intent on victory rather than peace, wondered until we realized that there is the widest possible difference between "likeness" and "identity," and that the latter was declared in the very strongest terms by our Lord in His words, "I and the Father are one" (thing); and by His Apostle in the name "Word," which he gives Him; thereby shewing that His relation to the Father was as close as that of the word to the thought which it expresses. We, then, are thankful that the question was never left in doubt, but crystallized in those expressions which the Catholic Church has made her own: "The Godhead of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is all one; the glory equal, the majesty co-eternal. Such as the Father is, such is the Son. The Father Eternal, the Son Eternal; the Father Almighty, the Son Almighty; the Father is God, the Son is God; the Father is Lord, the Son Lord."

The mystery of the Undivided Essence of the Godhead, as we call it, is of course beyond us; but we accept it as a precious truth, a truth forming, if we may dare so to speak, the basis of the relationship between the Father and the Son. Identity of nature: this is the basis of unity. Do we ask how this concerns the subject of Christian unity? "The true unity of believers, like the Unity of Persons in the Holy Trinity, with which it is compared, is offered as something far more than a mere moral unity of purpose, feeling and affection; it is, in some mysterious mode which we cannot distinctly apprehend, a vital unity."\* Nothing is more clear than the loss which the Church has suffered through forgetfulness of this. On the one hand we have those who

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\* Westcott: *Gospel of S. John*, p. 246.

consider that the Church or the Kingdom of God is so wide as to embrace all mankind; on the other, so narrow that only those who can pronounce a party shibboleth are its members. The first considers that baptism is only an outward recognition of a citizenship which was possessed before. The African savage, living in ignorance of the Gospel, is a member though he knows it not; or he may know it, and, like the king waiting for his coronation, is looking to his baptism as attesting it in the eyes of the world. A unity of the Church, however, which is to be as comprehensive as the unity of mankind is likely to be so attenuated, so unreal, that it never could make such an impression on the world as would lead to its conversion.

The second, forgetting the unity of nature conferred by baptism—"In one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, . . . and were all made to drink of one Spirit"\*\*—have cut themselves off from their brethren in Christ, and refused to acknowledge their unity with them in the One body. They have made the basis of unity to consist in a similarity of creed or confession, in something which man has made, in a mere opinion, it may be.

Now, whilst it is undeniable that there can be no unity where there is a profession of different faiths, whilst it is certain that the Scripture insists on the One Faith as well as the One Baptism, yet many an obstacle may be removed out of the path of unity by a frank recognition of the fact that it is in their baptism, and not in their acknowledgment of the creed, that men are made members of the Church. The Wesleyan, the Presbyterian, the Independent, being duly baptized

into the Sacred Name, are all members of the One Church, are indeed Churchmen, though they may hold opinions at variance with some point of the teaching of the Undivided Church. They are all members of the same Lord, all possessed of His glorious life, all indwelt by His blessed Spirit. This, surely, is a fact of immense significance, and enables us to see a unity in Christ of foundation which embraces almost all Christendom.

And passing from the Church to the family, how precious we feel the recognition of this foundation truth. Had men realized the truth taught by our Lord, that in marriage husband and wife are one in nature, they twain having become "one flesh," how much that has led to divorce would be impossible. Identity of nature is the foundation of unity in the home as well as unity in the Church.

(2) *Distinctness of relationships.*—

But this is only one element in the Divine Unity ; the second is of equal importance, namely, the distinction in personal relationship, or, as it has been named, "the interchange of the energy of the Divine life." We have been taught to confess that in the Unity of the Godhead there is "One Person of the Father, Another of the Son": that there is "One Father, not three Fathers; One Son, not three Sons." We have been taught to differentiate between the Father and the Son: to acknowledge the Father as a true Father, the Son as a true Son. This lesson has not, however, been so easy to learn as that of the Unity of Nature. So clearly has that truth been taught that there are but few Christians who find any difficulty in such expressions as declare the true Godhead of the Son. That He should be declared to be One with the Father, existing before Abraham, the Eternal Word, the only Way, the only

Truth, the only Life, the express Image of the Divine Substance, God over all blessed for ever, is what we have been accustomed to believe. We give no heed to any one bringing any other doctrine. This is the faith once delivered to the saints, irrevocable, unalterable, irreversible, in which we try to live, move, and have our being.

But with this truth there is, as we saw in the last chapter, another which speaks of the Son as doing nothing by Himself, and living by Another. We find, in other words, an interchange of personal life, in which authority belongs to the Father, obedience to the Son; independence of origination to the Father, but dependence to the Son. We find in the Divine Unity two elements apparently contradictory, which alone explain in a unity of perfect equality the paradoxical statements, "My Father is greater than I" and "The Head of Christ is God." That the Greatness and Headship do not refer to Essence is plain, for that has already been declared to be identical with that of the Father; not to Omniscience, Omnipotence, Omnipresence, for "as the Father is Almighty, so the Son is Almighty; as the Father is incomprehensible, so the Son is incomprehensible." No; the greatness has respect to relationship. The Father is first, the Son second; the Father sends, the Son is sent; the Father speaks, the Son obeys; the Father authorizes, the Son receives. The life of initiation and authority is the life of the Father; the life of execution and obedience is the life of the Son. The Father is a true Father, willing, sending, ordaining; the Son is a true Son, hearing, doing, seeking not His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him.\*

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\*See Pearson: *Exposition of the Creed*, Article I., pp. 61-76 (Cambridge edition.)

At first—for our own sense of what is right and wrong is so dulled by pride—we think that there must be inferiority in that position of the Son which the Scripture marks out. We suppose that the life of obedience is lower than the life of authority, the receptive life less exalted than the life of giving. Our Lord's whole life was a correction of this. “Whether is greater,” He asks, “he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth?” Would you not say, He that sitteth at meat? And yet what is the fact? “I am among you as he that serveth.”\*

But this mysterious truth, of what practical concern is it to us in our study of the subject of Unity? It is not difficult, indeed, to see its reference to the unity of the home; for “the Head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man; and the Head of Christ is God.”† And as the Divine relationship is founded on the Eternal Origin of the Son from the Father, so the human relationship is founded on the temporal origin of the woman from the man; for “the man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man.”‡ The unity of the family, then, depends not only on the recognition that the man and the wife are “no longer twain, but one flesh,” but on the further recognition that in this one life there are two elements, that of authority and that of service, that of giving and that of receiving. We know how beautifully these two principles are emphasized in the marriage service, where the Church exacts, on the one hand, from the man the rule of giving, that he endow his wife with all his worldly goods, that he give her, so long as he shall live, comfort, protection and loyal affiance; and, on the other, from the woman the

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\* S. Luke xxii. 27.

† 1 Cor. xi. 3.

‡ 1 Cor. xi. 8.

rule of obedience and service. And yet, so fallen from Divine light and truth are we that it is this very obligation of obedience and service, the mark, as we have seen, of the eternal life of the Son, that is the subject of so much criticism. It has been supposed that unity must mean a double centre of origination : that there is no equality unless there are two separate spheres of independence, that there can be no peace unless the identity of nature is expressed in identity of office. A little thought, however, will convince us that any such unity will be of a dead, formal character, very different from that of God, which is life.

Passing from the home, we can see without much difficulty how much real peace the Church would have enjoyed had this second principle of Divine Unity been always uppermost in her life. From the very first, as is evident from the Acts of the Apostles, it has been most difficult to obtain a clear recognition of the blessing that belongs to the life of dependence in the Church. There was a time when many wished to rank as teachers, nay, even as Apostles, when all sought to claim Divine authority. But, in spite of divisions, there was from the first a number of men chosen by the Lord Himself, and invested by Him with Divine authority. This body was so select that, when one of the number failed, though two apparently equally fit men were found to fill his position, only one was added to the number. These Twelve represented our Lord : and, as time went on, others, like S. Paul, were allowed to exercise the same authority. As death thinned the members of the Apostolic Body, their jurisdiction was given to others, like S. Timothy and S. Titus, and from them to others, to whom in time the general name bishop was exclusively applied. So authority, the necessary pledge of

unity, was planted in the Church ; planted, it will be observed, by the Lord, not by the Church ; from above, not from beneath. That it found two and then three spheres of operation, that of bishops, priests and deacons, only emphasizes its importance. That the unity of the Church depended upon its recognition is clear from the appeals made by the Apostles to the various Churches to obey those that were set over them in the Lord. For fifteen hundred years, in spite of the autocratic and tyrannical manner in which this authority was exercised, it was scarcely questioned. Then tyranny led to revolt, and revolt to the creation of new centres of authority ; but this time from below, and not from above. A new principle was started, namely, that any congregation of Christian persons could give authority to one of their number to act over them as minister.

From the purely social point of view there was nothing incorrect in this ; but not only was the authority thus conferred of earth, and not of heaven ; not only was the jurisdiction extremely limited, it being necessarily confined to those who had part in the election ; but it was temporal ; lasting, and lasting only, during the good pleasure of the congregation. It was in every respect different from Apostolic Authority, which was of the Lord, and not of men ; which was valid throughout the Church, and not only in one congregation of it ; and which was eternal ; for as princes should they sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And though we are not told that they conferred this on any successors, yet the fact that the same kind of authority is found after their decease gives a very strong presumption in favour of it, almost amounting to proof.

We have, then, in the Christian Church at present the exercise of two kinds of authority. The one is

that which takes for its basis a fact which it relies upon history to prove, that its ministry have the authority which was delegated to them by Apostles through a long line of spiritual ancestors. Whatever may be said about the historical proof, the claim made and unquestioned for fifteen hundred years is that this authority is from Jesus Christ, and attested by an outward sign, that it is valid everywhere and for all time. The other is that which takes for its basis the congregation, and makes no claim beyond that in which it ministers. Between these two, which are clear and logical, there are others which, like the Presbyterian ministry, rest partly on the one and partly on the other.

The question which now seriously engages the attention of all thoughtful Christians is how this clashing of authorities may be stayed. The necessity of authority, and that it should possess some Divine sanction, is becoming more and more widely recognized; and it is considered more and more perilous that its only proof should be the excellence of the works done in the name of Christ. Our Lord tells us plainly that great works may be done by those whom He never recognized.\* Authority must, then, have a basis of its own; and, in spite of all that is said about the difficulty of proving an historic succession, there can be but little question that the care which has been from time immemorial taken in securing the outward sign of it, constitutes *prima facie* evidence that the historic basis is well founded. When this is recognized—and there can be no doubt that its recognition has made great progress within the last fifty years—some method ought to be found whereby the wider, fuller authority might be sought for without disparagement of the authority that

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\* S. Matt. vii. 22-23.

has been exercised, it may be, for many years. An illustration of this may be given. A Presbyterian minister of great eminence was asked how he came to seek Orders in the Anglican Church whilst he still believed in the validity of his Presbyterian ordination. His reply was: "I sought a wider jurisdiction."

It may be that there are many who would be quite able to satisfy any inquiry as to their knowledge of the apostolic faith, and glad to have the wider and fuller authority of the apostolic Church, if in so doing it could be shewn that the step involved no disparagement of their previous ministry. In that case it might be possible for the congregation, as well as the pastor, to receive such blessing as such a step would surely bring. But whatever be the method, the fuller knowledge of our Lord as the eternal Son of God will assuredly bring with it conviction that in the Church of God there must be a well-defined authority and a loyal obedience. No plan for Church unity is likely to succeed where this is ignored. It may be that, at a time when the apostolic authority of the Church was rudely shaken, good men have given their sanction to a ministry suddenly created by the necessities of the times; but whatever excuse may be urged then is not valid now, when we have learned, by criticism and history, how surely grounded apostolic authority was from the very first days. To cite but one example: it seems impossible that Ignatius could have written, at the end of the first century, so plainly and strongly as he did on the principle unless he was relying on apostolic tradition.

(3) *Love.*

Enough, however, has been said on this point. We now look at the third element in the Divine Unity,

namely, Love. It is from forgetfulness of this that so much difficulty has arisen in the recognition of authority. That word, unhappily, through its associations stands for aloofness, hauteur, severity. It is not the authority of the Father, but of a system, a discipline, an ecclesiastical body. How different this from that Divine authority which works through love. "The Father loveth the Son, and sheweth Him all things that Himself doeth."\* "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father."† This lack of reserve; this full revelation of the Father's mind, so that no secret is unshared by the Son; this joy in the honour of the Son; this Divine longing that His humiliation, His dependence should not rob Him of one smallest grain of the full honour that belongs to the Father; this entire committal to Him of the judgment of the universe, that all should recognize the co-equality of the Son with the Father: what a contrast to the exercise of authority in the Church and in the home!

The separation in the past of bishops and priests from their flocks, the indisposition to admit the laity into their councils, the pomp and reserve behind which the rulers of the Church have been hidden, the eager desire they have shewn for honour and place: how entirely alien from that heavenly pattern which we are bidden to follow! Can it be doubted that, had the authority of the ecclesiastics of the middle ages been tempered with love, the break of the Reformation would never have taken place? We live now in happier days. Laymen are receiving the honour which is their

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\* S. John v. 20.

† S. John v. 22-23.

due. They are invited to share the counsels of bishops and priests. Prelacy, in the sense of ecclesiastical despotism, is a thing of the past. Nay, it seems as though the Church's danger might lie in the opposite direction, in placing her authority where it cannot and must not be. Still, in spite of such danger, who does not welcome the altered state of things, and see in it a recognition of that element of sympathy and love which is a feature of the Divine Unity?

It is not otherwise with the home. There, too, is growing a fuller recognition of love as the basis of authority, of honour as the tribute to obedience. Everywhere the place of the wife is receiving that dignity and distinction which is the peculiar reward of those whose greatness consists in service.

The Divine Unity is being more and more clearly manifested; its glory, which is mercifully revealed to us in Holy Scripture, is more and more fully venerated and adored; and as it enters into men's hearts, it dispels the dark shadows of separation and independence, and plants a holy fear in each heart; so that, looking upward to those who are placed above him, man rejoices in shewing the life of the Son; and looking downwards to those who are placed below him, he joys in manifesting the life of the Father; and so, drawing all to himself as a centre of unity, he becomes more and more perfect, even as the Son, nay, even as His Father in heaven is perfect.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST AS KING.

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To the Jew first, and also to the Greek.—*Rom.* i. 16.

Ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.—*Acts* i. 8.

**S**O far we have studied the methods by which we may know our Lord in relation to ourselves. Our own little life, if we are careful to seek for the signs of His Presence, will reveal much that may be built up into an experience that can say, with some degree of certainty, “I know in Whom I have believed.” But no Christian can rest content with this. The Christ in Whom he believes is a King, the mighty Sovereign of a great Kingdom which is extending daily and gradually taking possession of the earth. The kingdoms of this world are becoming the kingdoms of Christ: \* and this not by compulsion or the sword, but by persuasion, by “art of human word.” We shall not, then, know Him as He may be known unless we watch with care the progress of the great Society He has founded. To take an illustration. If some friend of mine whom I have learned to know had obtained, by some strange fortune,

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\* *Rev.* xi. 15.

the throne of a great kingdom, I should at first expect that, being immersed in public affairs, he would have no time to give to me, and that my friendship was likely to suffer; but if I found that not only was his care for me and interest in my small life undiminished, but that he wished me to see something of the great affairs of State in which he was now engaged, how gladly I should respond, how I should welcome any opportunities which might lead me to understand what I may call the public side of his character. I should naturally feel that, precious and valuable as the personal knowledge was, it needed supplementing by the wider knowledge of his sovereignty if I were to know him fully.

It is not otherwise with Christ. The two disciples who knew Him best, S. Paul and S. John, are they who shew the closest interest in the fortunes of His Kingdom. S. Paul, in such letters as that to the Ephesians, and S. John, in the book of the Revelation, carry us so far in their descriptions of the purposes and fortunes of the Kingdom that we find it difficult to follow them. The very loftiest imagery is employed to inspire us with the interest they themselves felt. A knowledge, then, of what we call missionary work can only fail to be attractive when it is looked upon as a geographical or philanthropic enterprise, when it is dissociated from Him. But when, on the contrary, we look upon it as giving some account of the "open doors" He has secured, of the outposts He is planting here and there, of the colonies that He is developing that in time they may become States of His empire, it becomes to us what the present growth of our own empire is, strangely interesting. We feel that a study of it will give us some knowledge of His plans, words that He spake will gain a new meaning, and it will not be strange if

we find in His Sovereignty some principles that touch ourselves very nearly.

Of course, the difficulty that first meets us is where to find such an account of His present work in the world as may enable us to gauge the progress of His Kingdom. Owing to causes which we need not now discuss, the army at present in the field is to some extent divided, and we have bodies of regular forces not only acting independently of one another, but also acting apart from large bodies of active and energetic irregular forces. The attack is confused, and its results not very readily perceived. Our attention is naturally drawn to that part of the force which we ourselves have sent out, and we are apt to draw conclusions which are probably as erroneous as generalizations of the British army would be if, ignoring all that has been done by Colonial contingents—*e.g.*, the yeomanry, the artillery, in Africa—we were to base them on a few facts known about one of the regiments in which we are specially interested. We are, therefore, obliged to give up trying to gain from the field itself such a knowledge of our Lord's foreign policy, if we may use such an expression, as would give us fresh insight into His principles. The field we watch is too small. But what we cannot obtain from the present mission field we may be able to find in that field which is laid open to us in the Acts of the Apostles. There we find the Church going forth to her conquests with one heart and mind, and evidently acting on a well-defined plan of campaign. It is this that we must look closely at to find principles; and when we have discovered them, we can look to that part of the present field in which we are chiefly interested to find illustrations of them.

Now, in looking at the Acts of the Apostles with such

light as is thrown upon it by the Gospels, we find three principles—(1) Limitation, or Concentration; (2) Continuity, or Conservatism; (3) Adaptation, or Freedom; and these are based on three distinguishing characteristics of the Lord, namely, Patience, Obedience, Love.

The first principle is indicated in the great promise of power which the Church was to receive and to exercise. She was to receive the Holy Ghost, and to bear witness to her King *in Jerusalem, all Judea, Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*\* The order suggests sequence. First, Jerusalem is to be evangelized, then Judæa, then Samaria, and then the rest of the world. But had not this, which means, of course, a certain limitation, been clearly laid down, we might have guessed it from our Lord's own action. When we consider how fruitful the Apostolic work became when it left the narrow confines of Palestine, we feel surprised that our Lord not only rigidly bound Himself to it, but expressly stated to a heathen who sought His help just over the border that He was not sent "*but to the lost sheep of the House of Israel.*"† The whole world was hungering for Him; some Greeks actually sought Him out; a citizen of Rome, in the employ of Rome, had shewn a greater faith than even the Apostles had done; the Jews were either indifferent or hostile; and yet He confined Himself to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. There must have been some reason for this. We ask what it was. Does it not lie in this, that missionary work can only hope to be ultimately successful where it is carried on in ground prepared for it? For over one thousand years Israel had been in training, in school, we may say, receiving that education which was

\* Acts i. 8.

† S. Matt. xv. 24.

to make her the great missionary nation of the world. It is true, the education seemed as though it had completely failed, so small were its results; but our Lord trusted it, and His trust was afterwards largely rewarded. It is inconceivable that any Greek or Roman heathen could have written S. Paul's letters. It is also inconceivable that anyone but a Jew would have shewn the missionary zeal that he did, a zeal that has never been surpassed.

But not only did our Lord trust it, but His Apostles had such confidence in it that for a long time they supposed that not only was the world to be reached *by* Israel, but *in* Israel. It needed a strange vision and a wondrous sign, a sign as remarkable in its way as that of Pentecost, to convince S. Peter that heathen could become Christians except through first becoming Jews. Though they knew from our Lord's teaching, from such words of His as "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw *all men* unto Me,"\* that He had relations with the whole world; yet from such other words as "Salvation is of the Jews,"† and those we have already commented upon, it seemed clear that only through and in Israel could this relationship become a reality. They had the command to go into all the world and make disciples of all the nations, and they were quite prepared to execute it; but no other method of fulfilling it occurred to them except that with which they had been familiar for many, many years, namely, the method of making Jewish proselytes. And if we suppose that the Council of Jerusalem which authorized a wider principle took place in the year 53, we see that it was twenty years before the Church was prepared to give a larger liberty. Now, we

\* S. John xii. 32.

† S. John iv. 22.

must not forget that during this time she was under the direct guidance of the Holy Ghost, Who filled her as perhaps never before or since, and we therefore naturally suppose that some great principle was at stake which the newer method would endanger if pressed too hastily. That principle was the one of which I am speaking, the principle of Limitation.

Turning, now, to the work of the great missionary Apostle, S. Paul, we ask, what was his attitude towards it? He was zealous as none before or since. He was a Roman citizen, and had, we may suppose, received part of his education at the celebrated university of that city of which he was so proud. It might, therefore, be expected that in his desire to bring all men to know the Lord he would throw aside every restriction that hampered. We might suppose that when he went into Asia with the Gospel he would avoid those places where Jewish opposition was likely to be excited, and preach to purely heathen congregations. The Jews had rejected Christ, and everywhere opposed themselves to the Gospel. What a waste of time, then, to be arguing with them when the heathen outside were thirsting for his news. Whatever temptations S. Paul had to pursue what seemed the easier path, he never gave way to them. His rule always and everywhere was "first to the Jews, then to the Gentiles." And if we follow his journeys, we see how he could pass by large and important cities as Amphipolis and Apollonia, till he came to a place like "Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews."\*

We can easily see the advantage of such a course. Saturated as the Jews were in the teaching of their

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\* Acts xvii. 1.

Scriptures and Ritual, inspired by a common hope, there was something to appeal to. They were already interested in his subject. S. Paul's only task, then, lay in shewing them that their hope was fulfilled, their interest satisfied. But though the principle is reasonable, we are doubtful how long it was adhered to, even in Apostolic days. It made great demands on patience: it exposed those who acted upon it to great perils; it lacked the novelty that always accompanies the preaching of the Gospel to heathen peoples. As the Jews always opposed themselves to the Christian teachers, it seemed as though it were not worth while to try to win them over. And so, probably, it was not seldom abandoned. Missionary journeys were made to places like India, where it is probable that but few Jews would be found. It may be that the cause of the want of spiritual stability shewn in the history of the missions in Armenia, Abyssinia, and amongst the Goths is due to the fact that there were but few, if any, synagogues there; and that the work in Arabia, India and Persia failed, to a large extent, from the same cause.

But though the principle has been justified by the success that has followed its practice and the failure that has attended its abandonment, it is strange to find how indifferent the Church on the whole is to it. Not only does the Christian missionary generally prefer the heathen village to the town where his own countrymen have made a settlement, but in many cases to the Christian colony. He tells you, as S. Paul might have said, that his fellow citizens, dispersed throughout the world from commercial or selfish motives, are far more difficult to move than the heathen. And yet, if it was important that the Christian Gospel should follow along the line of the Jews, it is still more important that it should follow along the line of

the Christians. If the dispersed Jews, with their knowledge of the Old Testament, their reverence for a dignified and pure worship, their devotion to the Messiah, formed a nucleus in a heathen city of the greatest possible value to those who were planting the Church, then, surely, the Christians now living in heathen cities ought to form the most helpful support; nay, rather, the seed of all future work. But the difficulties, it is said, are too serious; the lack of Christian enthusiasm too sadly apparent: the commonplace character of the work—"I might as well be in England"—too dull for the man who has been fired by the command, "Go ye into all the world." So the scattered colonists are left alone. And, instead of concentrating our attention, massing our forces on our own empire—sadly in need of them—and working upon the three hundred millions of heathens entrusted to our care through our own English settlements, we are spending part of our force on districts in countries like Corea, China and Japan, where the Englishman is hardly known; where it is sometimes boasted the Christian has never been seen. So much, then, for the first principle, Limitation.

The second, Continuity, touches us still more nearly. It has been shewn, again and again, how much of history lies hidden in "the fulness of time" in which Christ came; how not only the Jews, but the Romans and Greeks, contributed elements to that preparation which made propagation of the Gospel so much easier than it otherwise would have been. Greece "gave a universal language and literature, by seizing the general laws of beauty and thought: Rome founded a universal empire by asserting, with instinctive justice, the great principles of right in her dependent provinces"; and S. Paul, the

great missionary Apostle, used both of these to the full. He not only, it would appear, confined his work to places where Greek was known and spoken, but where Roman law was respected. This has been brought out with great clearness by Professor Ramsay, in the various lectures and books he has written on the subject of the Acts of the Apostles. He was struck, he tells us, with the extraordinary diversity of rate in the propagation of Christianity in different regions. In one place it spread with enormous rapidity; in another, apparently nearer the origin, it seemed to make no impression. He sought for a reason for the difference, and found it in "the lines of intercourse across the empire." "The life of the early Church," he writes, "lay in constant intercommunication between all its parts; its health and growth were dependent on the free circulation of the life blood of common thought and feeling. Hence it was firmly seated on the great lines of communication across the empire, that led from its origin in Jerusalem to its imperial centre in Rome. It had already struck root in Rome within little more than twenty years after the Crucifixion, and it had become really strong in the great city about thirty years after the Apostles began to work round and out from Jerusalem. This marvellous development was possible only because the seed of the new thought floated free on the main currents of communication which were ever sweeping back and forward between the heart of the Empire and its outlying members. Paul, who mainly directed the great movement, threw himself boldly and confidently into the life of the time; he took the Empire as it was, accepted its political conformation and arrangement, and sought only to touch the spiritual and moral life of the people while he always advised them

to obey the existing Government and conform to the existing laws of the State and society, so far as they did not lead into direct conflict with Christian principles." The same thought has been expressed by a German writer, Gustav Warneck, even more directly: "The missionaries followed the public roads which God Himself had laid out, and occupied the stations which His hand indicated." They did not go, then, wherever heathen were to be found; they did not believe that the command, "Go ye into all the world," meant that, in some way or another, they were to cover the whole of the world; though they had peculiar gifts for evangelization, and miraculous powers certain to impress ignorant heathen peoples, they recognized that a certain order had been laid down in our Lord's words, and when Jerusalem, Judæa and Samaria had been evangelized, and they were free to embark on the great Western Sea, they sought and found, in the guidance of the Holy Ghost, the order in which the conquest of the world was to be effected. And this order was found to be along the lines of national enterprise. It is to be noted how the history tells us that when S. Paul was tempted to turn from the Imperial roads he was warned back again.\* That the work planted along those lines has been successful is clear from the history of missions in Europe, and the contrast that it presents with the history of missions elsewhere.

And yet, here again, the branches of the Christian Church seem to be missing their true goal, for, instead of concentrating their forces on the heathen in their own colonies, they are spreading themselves over the face of the earth, where neither government nor language

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\* Acts xvi.

could be of any assistance. It seemed, indeed, as though English missionary activity would at first follow what appears to be the Divine order. Prepared, by the revival of Greek learning, to take a wider outlook; by the invention of printing to circulate with comparative ease and quickness every message given to her; by the Bible and Prayer Book in her own tongue to make her faith intelligible; and by her interests in the newly-discovered America to sympathize with those outside her own borders, a Society was formed, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, for the Propagation of the Gospel, whose first aim, according to her charter, should be to instruct her colonists, and then to minister to the heathen surrounding them. And it is at least significant that, directly this resolve was formed, our Lord gave her increasing opportunity, year by year, to fulfil it, until at last she has a large part of the earth in possession, and at least three hundred millions of heathen to bring into Christ's fold. But, pressed first by this demand and then by that, urged again and again by those who said the Church's marching orders were to go into all the world, and yet forgot the significance that lay in the words, "Make disciples of all the nations," the Society yielded, and, whilst clinging to her charter, yet sanctioned important exceptions, thus leaving parts of the Empire hopelessly undermanned.

We now pass to the third principle, Adaptation. It would not be difficult to shew how this runs through the whole of our Lord's life, which is, we may say, one continuous expression of it. Knowing what was in man, able to penetrate behind those national or racial distinctions which we find so baffling, He met each man, whether Roman, Samaritan, Greek or Jew, on his own ground, and so gave him that particular help he chiefly

needed. The Apostle, who knew Him so well, carried this principle out in his missionary operations. In his own words, he says: "Unto the Jews I became as a Jew . . . ; to them that are under the law, as under the law . . . ; to them that are without law, as without law . . . ; to the weak became I as weak: . . . I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some."\* And the general statement is well borne out by facts. He would not have his heathen converts forced to circumcision; nor would he suffer them to be pressed, except by necessity, into breaking those social relations which, even after they became Christians, were so dear to them. As an illustration, take his wise dealing with those who had still many friends amongst the heathen. If asked to a heathen banquet or social entertainment, were they to go? And if so, might they partake of the food set on the table? Would it not be certain that much of it, perhaps all, had been offered to a false god in a heathen temple? These were difficult questions. How does S. Paul answer them? "If any of them that believe not" (*i.e.*, the heathen) "bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake. But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that shewed it."†

See another illustration of the same principle in his attitude towards Jewish prejudices. Again and again he had said that no one could be saved by the Mosaic law of ordinances; and yet, when it was pointed out to him that he might win over some of the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem by making himself one with certain Jews, who were fulfilling, in the strictest manner prescribed by the

\* 1 Cor. ix. 20-22.

† 1 Cor. x. 27-33.

law, a vow, he did not hesitate for a moment, but at once did it, though no one knew better than he how useless it would be.

So, too, in his speeches and sermons, there is to be seen the same careful consideration of the disposition and character of his audience. At Lystra he does not mention our Lord at all; at Athens, only towards the end. He never attempted to set the whole Gospel before those who were not prepared for it. Like his Master, he spake as they were able to bear it. And, so far as we are able to discover, he shewed great unwillingness to interfere with the civil life of his converts. To the slave he preaches contentment with his lot; to the slaveowner, consideration towards his slaves. As he did not wish men to become Jews, so neither did he wish them to become Romans.

So, too, in services. There were certain great principles of order, such as the appearance and behaviour of women in churches, and the moderation of the exercise of the exciting gift of tongues, but there was probably no stereotyped form. Converts would naturally prefer the form of the celebration of the Eucharist which had been observed from the first, but local variations would, no doubt, grow up, and, as time went on, become greatly cherished.

So, too, in the adaptation of instruments for the work. S. Paul chose from those amongst whom he worked his presbyters and workers. It is strange to find that, on the first missionary journey, he does not hesitate, when returning, to ordain presbyters in every Church, though they must have been converts of only a few months' standing. The Churches were built up from within, not from without.\*

\* Acts xiv. 23.

Now, in looking at the application of this third principle in modern missions, it is impossible not to notice how timorous and hesitating our own Church is in its adoption. As *The Spectator* wrote some years ago :\* “With us the difference of civilization is allowed to count for too much. There is a disposition to think that a convert who has not become in all respects like a middle-class European of the more pious habits of mind, falls short of the desired ideal. . . . Whereas, the object should be to utilize, not suppress, the native side.” Again : “No preference is given in Asia to Jewish and Arab missionaries. The Arab has the tongue of a poet, the manner of a born teacher, and a heart with fire in it. A hundred Arabs, as wandering preachers in Africa, would carry Christianity into its very depths.” Why are they not used? Why do we feel that our missionaries must be European, and neglect the forces which lie in similarity of colour, civilization and thought? We are tempted to forget that in Him “there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, neither male nor female; but that all are one”;† and that, in some way, we must represent His mind by avoiding all partiality, by reverencing all distinctions in human nature; and so we consequently lose that knowledge of Him which is to be found in the Hindoo, Kaffir, Zulu, Maori, Negro, and Indian. For they all are His; they are all made to reflect some feature of His mind and character which we have not yet seen, and, if we can but use what they bring, “our creed will grow radiant with a fresh glory by the light which they are fitted to cast upon it.”

It must not be supposed, from the above, that the

\* *Spectator*, 8th May, 1897.

† Gal. iii. 28.

English Church has shewn greater timidity in these respects than other Churches. Far from it. She does use the Imperial highways, and has an increasing native ministry. The Roman Church, having done her best to kill national ecclesiastical life, cannot use, as we can, the force of national enterprise. The Greek Church, with its immovable, iron-bound autocracy, has almost lost its sense of missionary responsibility. The English Church has magnificent opportunities, and in the national character a certain genius for dealing with native peoples. But no one can read our missionary reports and magazines without seeing how difficult it is for Church or Nonconformist zeal to catch the native spirit and express it. Some societies at home would be horrified if the surplice or clerical coat were changed for some Oriental vestment that might give the sense of worship more quickly; if the architecture of the buildings were Eastern rather than Western; if changes in liturgy, ritual or simplest forms were made. The zeal—and it is too full of love and power to be criticized—must run on in its old channels, and consequently the comparatively trifling disputes of English ecclesiastical life are carried into an atmosphere where their history is unknown and their character unintelligible. Of course, it cannot be forgotten that the services of the English congregation, where there is one, set the norm which natives, with their love of imitation and shrinking from originality, do not care to depart from; but it will be a sad confession of impotence if, for example, the external form of Indian Christianity is to be a weak imitation of English religious life.

Now, bearing these three principles in mind, we ought to be able to read the accounts of our Lord's work in the world with intelligence. We shall see, in

the first place, the meaning that underlies the great colonizing movement which has distinguished the past, as it will distinguish the present century. The movements of England in Africa, America in the Philippines, Russia in China, what are they but parts of that great plan by which He designs to reach the heathen through the Christian Church in its social as well as its religious life?

We shall see, in the second place, that the difficulties which beset the Christian missionary in his work are largely due to those features of unlikeness which it is so important to preserve. We shall then seek to find, in such reports as reach us, what the distinctive features of the native races are, what those characteristics which strike us as so un-English mean ; in fact, what contribution they are bringing to the knowledge of the Lord ; for they, too, are His children, and “we all are brethren.”

And as we become more familiar with His plans and principles, we shall see how they explain His own dealings with us ; how the patience which will not hurry the great operations tarries with the small ; how the same care for the type which is seen in the relation of Christ to the heathen is also seen in the relation of Christ to the individual ; how He wishes for us that we should be ourselves, ourselves fully and completely, and not weak reflections of others. We shall understand, also, that in His development of our characters He will not neglect those educative influences of school, university, and foreign travel which have done so much to shape our own lives. Those are His preparations, and those assuredly He will not neglect.

This chapter must not be closed without an expression of regret that it appears to be pervaded by a spirit of

criticism quite alien to the conception of the main subject. And the work, the direction of which this criticism specially affects, is of such a singularly noble character, is marked by such special devotion to our Lord and sustained by such constant reliance upon the Holy Ghost, that the word presumption hardly expresses the character of conclusions so widely different from those current amongst missionary experts and enthusiasts. The author understands, however, both from what he has himself heard, and also from the reports of others, that the late Bishop of Durham held views not unlike those here expressed as to the concentration of missionary work. The interested bystander, too, whose difficulties certainly deserve consideration, will often express his bewilderment at principles which, however magnificently illustrated by noble confessions and martyred lives, imply the evangelization of China, Japan and Corea at the cost of our own fellow subjects in India and Africa. The feeling that the whole world must be evangelized, if not in our generation, at least in this century, is a noble one, and it would be impious to deny its possibility. But the zeal that is kindled at this glorious prospect must not disregard the lessons learned in Scripture and the teaching of history. It will be for others to say whether they are those of this chapter, or those more in accord with modern missionary thought. The writer is conscious that he has only presented one side, but he believes it to be an important one, leading to fresh knowledge of the ever living Lord. It was from this point of view he contemplated it, and with the hope that by it Christ's sovereignty might be more fully recognized he has ventured to put it forward.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### CONCLUSION.

THOSE who have read the preceding chapters will have realized that we have only touched the fringe of a great subject. Suggestions have been made and hints thrown out as to how all may, nay, ought to have a part in the living, experimental knowledge of Christ ; but a large field is still left unexplored. Christ touches us in all points, not only in the few that have been mentioned. The life of thought, worship and recreation, deeply interesting as our Lord's relation to each is, has been omitted ; so, too, the social and political life ; so, too, His particular revelations in the great crises of life, such as Confirmation, Conversion, Marriage and Death ; but it is hoped that enough has been said to start such questions as : May Jesus Christ, though He be Lord of all, be known as a Friend ? Are the hymns of Xavier, S. Bernard, the Wesleys, John Keble, Miss Havergal imaginary poems, or the offspring of a real experience ? Can we take them on our lips, as we are so often asked to do, without a fear that, if questioned as to our own experience, we should have nothing to say ? The book has endeavoured to shew that such experiences are most real, and that we ought to have our share in them.

But not without trouble, not without cost. The effort

must be sustained and unflagging. Any relaxation will lead to hesitation and doubt. The mind must be concentrated on every part of life, whether large or small; not only what we call the important events, but the unimportant; not only red letter days, but the days unmarked by any feature, good or bad. All must reflect His action. The "falling of a sparrow to the ground" is not a great event, but it never occurs without the knowledge and will of Christ.\* The loss of something as insignificant as a hair of our head is certainly of infinitely small importance, but we are assured by Christ that it is not unnoticed. We must give up the idea suggested by such words as accidents, mishaps, lucky events, and such like. There are really no such things. All are ordered, though the action of our free-will has a part in their ordering. There is nothing superstitious in this confidence that we have in Christ's direction of all things. Superstition is the false notion that inanimate things or combinations of circumstances can of themselves influence life. It is superstitious to believe that a certain stone always brings ill luck, a certain flower always good luck; that because thirteen people sit down to a meal something evil will happen; or that to help our neighbour to salt is to cause him misfortune; or that to go to sea on a Friday is to ensure a bad voyage. But it is not superstitious to believe that my friend's call on a particular day when a missionary from India was staying with me, which led to his undertaking foreign work, was designed by Christ; that the bodily injury which led to the deepening of character was pre-ordained; that the absence from home which led to an important decision was pre-arranged. Superstition is

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\* S. Matt. x. 29-30.

essentially unreasonable : but faith in Christ's providential ordering of all things is profoundly reasonable.

Directly the Life recorded in the Gospels is accepted as true, and Jesus Christ is believed to be alive and all powerful, His relation to unimportant as well as important people, to insignificant as well as momentous events follows as a matter of course; for we are assured that He is the same to-day as in the yesterday when He lived in Palestine. With this belief, no life is or can be dull, no place or event is or can be of small importance. Bethlehem and Nazareth have had a larger share in the world's history than Rome or Athens ; and a few fishing folk in an obscure country not larger than Wales have more influence in modern Europe than Socrates or Plato. The unimportant became important ; the small became great. Why? Simply because they were used by Christ and responded to His touch. Capernaum, Chorazin, Bethsaida, Pilate, Caiaphas and Herod sink into insignificance or remain as beacons of warning. They saw the Christ, heard Him, but never yielded to His will. The question this book raises is, Are the same possibilities open now? Religion asserts they are, and fraught with the most important consequences to our country and empire. The aim of the previous discussion has been missed if it is supposed that vital religion begins and ends in an experience. Such an experience could not be that of the living Christ—Whose heart and mind throb in responsive sympathy with the social and intellectual problems of our time. The man who knows Him recognizes Him, as S. Paul did, as suffering with and in His faithful members, and he cannot, therefore, remain a cool observer of the movements that affect both Him and them. But his attitude is one of hope as well as sympathy. He never

forgets Christ has conquered : and if he sometimes, with Nature, “travails in pain and groans” in his impatient waiting for the expected Redemption, he knows it will come, for he has the sense of it within himself. The same Master is at work in the world as in his own nature :

From seeming evil still educating good :  
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